00038296

BOMBAY BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 April, 2016

KENNEE-VOO;

OR,

THE SACKING OF ALLAROONAH:

AN INCIDENT OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

BY

THOMAS GREENHALGH,

(AUTHOR OF "LANCASHIRE LIFE.")

38296

"Afric is all the sun's, and as her earth
Her human clay is kindled; full of power
For good or evil, burning from its birth—
* * * there grain, and flower, and fruit,
Gush from the earth until the land runs o'er;
But there, too, many a poison-tree has root,
And midnight listens to the lion's roar;
And as the soil is, so the heart of man."

BYRON.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

MDCCCLVI.

00038296

KENNEE-VOO.

CHAPTER I.

"From Nile and Congo's undiscover'd springs,
To the four seas which gird the unhappy land,
Behold it! left a prey to barbarous kings,
The robber, or the trader's ruthless hand;
Sinning and suffering, everywhere unblest,
Behold her wretched sons, oppressing and opprest."

SOUTHEY.

To most persons the name of Africa is associated with ideas of tyranny and barbarism only; and presents to their minds scenes of desolation where death rules triumphant. They think of the thousands of warriors who in ancient times perished amid its arid deserts; or of the tens of thousands who, lured on by a lust for gain, have found, instead of the wealth they sought, a grave in its swamps, or have left their bones on its sun-scorched soil until their numbers have marked out a ghastly track by which the traveller guides his living ship across the oceans of sand. Nor are

individual sufferings forgotten: they shudder as they read of the privations endured by modern travellers, who, actuated by motives of philanthropy or personal ambition, have risked, and but too frequently lost, their lives in attempts to discover the geography, or lay open to the civilized world the vast commercial resources of this mysterious quarter of the globe.

And thus the whole of Africa within the tropics is to them only a vast charnel house; an abhorrent and savage land, in which nature is either sterile to famine or bountiful to exuberance. This is a fearful picture; and though too highly coloured is nevertheless, in some respects, a correct one. But our forefathers who lived in times of ignorance and superstition, seized with avidity the marvellous and ill-digested accounts of voyagers who knew, personally, nothing beyond the line of coast by which they had sailed: and the style of writing thus originated continued to be received by the nations of Europe, and that too with little contradiction, until at length men generally became prejudiced against any attempt to discover some reverse to the gloomy picture. And the few who endeavoured to point out a path by which civilization and commerce might be introduced into Central Africa,

were treated either as enthusiasts or as those who wished to expose their fellow men to certain death.

Terror and ignorance combined succeeded, century after century, in withholding the lovely scenes that nature year by year retouched with her skillful hand, surrounding them with vague rumours, and veiling them in an obscurity that seemed all but impenetrable. The consequence was, that until within a very few years, comparatively speaking, 15° North latitude and about the same of South were marked on the map of Africa as "country unexplored." How vast a field for the display of individual enterprise lay here—but age succeeded age, and still it was presented all but untrodden to the adventurous spirits of every nation; for few were found daring enough, even when stimulated by the hope of fame, to encounter such a multiplicity of dangers, and little was added to the general stock of knowledge by those who were so actuated.

It was reserved to our own age, and chiefly to the sons of Britain, to withdraw in some measure the veil. Hitherto the word "unexplored" had fallen on the ear with little more than its ordinary meaning: now however it possesses magical charms; and in a short

time a "terra incognita" will not exist on the surface of the globe. These African adventurers tell us that the supposed universal desolation contains, if not large tracts, at least many isolated spots, which in their glowing descriptions bring before us scenes of surpassing loveliness—scenes that to the Muslim must realize much of the paradise his prophet has promised him. But there is one exception to all this: a blot that almost mars the whole—"The forms that walk erect," and lord it over bird and beast, are not "in native honour clad," nor "worthy seem" to pass their lives in so fair a portion of creation.

It is chiefly in the mountain range, known to Europeans as that of Kong, and which stretches its rocky barrier in a direct line from the river Gambia to Benin, that these lovely valleys are to be found; and in one of which many of the incidents of the present narrative were enacted.

Guinea, for a breadth of country varying from two to three hundred miles from the coast line, has a flat or only slightly undulating surface, and is covered either with swamp and forest or rich pasture. This tract of country is bounded on the north-east by the Kong mountains, in one of the deepest recesses of

which, and near the point of junction of the kingdoms of Dahomy and Ashantee, stood the town of Allaroonah—signifying, in the native language, "the place of a courteous people."

It contained about eight thousand inhabitants, and covered a large extent of ground; the distance from wall to wall being considerably more than a mile. The fortifications—if they were deserving of so scientific a name—were eight feet in height, and composed of earth, which having been smoothed on the surface and baked hard by the sun, presented to the eye of a native warrior an almost insurmountable obstacle. A dry ditch, three feet in depth, ran along the outside; in this were planted spinal plants, such as the prickly pear, forming by the luxuriance of their growth a much better defence than water against the attacks of a half naked foe. There were four apertures in the wall; two as gateways, the others being caused by the bed of a stream that ran through the town dividing it into two unequal portions. These breaks were defended on either hand by mounds of clay, built solid, and ascended on the town side by flights of steps, and were so constructed that thirty warriors could be concealed on their basined summits,

and from thence cast their spears on the unwary assailants.

At the gateways there was no extra fortification whatever; for upon the approach of an enemy they could be built up in a very short time, and made to resemble part of the wall. The gates themselves were merely wooden frames of very rude construction, upon which were fastened, by means of thongs of elephants' hide, sheets of copper that bore evident signs of having, at some remote period, buffeted the waves of the ocean beneath the white man's ships.

The residence of the chief, or more properly the palace of the king—for the ancestors of Soo-Mah had long borne that title—stood in the centre of the town. It consisted of a cluster of mud huts, thatched with palm leaves, and built in the form of a quadrangle the sides of which enclosed a large space of ground. From this square rose the trunk of a giant cotton tree; and so immense was the spread of its leafy awning that the grateful shade could be enjoyed in any part of the court yard, and made the air cool even under the rays of a vertical sun. But what gave to the whole an appearance of beauty beyond that of many of the laboured works of more civilized nations, was

a number of graceful palms that shot up their tall light stems through the roofs of some of the huts. This description of the palace will answer for that of many of the other habitations. An open space, carpeted with fine grass, and more resembling a lawn than a public way, surrounded each group of huts, and accounted for the town extending over so much ground.

The most striking feature about the place, and one that had a truly pleasing effect, was a huge rock rising from the bed of the stream to an elevation that far exceeded the upward flight of an arrow, though shot by the strongest arm in Allaroonah; its majestic head towering a long way above the topmost boughs of the surrounding trees. Numerous crevices and small ledges intersected each other on its almost perpendicular sides, and from these there grew in great profusion, dwarf flowering shrubs, and parasitical plants that hung down their curling tendrils, hiding the rugged cliffs with a curtain of nature's loveliest handiwork. On the summit was a large Fetish-house, built of stone, and ornamented with rudely sculptured human figures, and protected from the sun's rays by a grove of palm trees; it was the grand temple of the Allaroonah Fetish, and inha-

bited by a certain number of priests who had attained to the highest mysteries of their superstitious faith.

The traditions respecting this curious rock were very numerous. One of these stories was wonderful, if true; for though never put to the test, it received implicit belief from the credulous natives, and formed the boast of every Allaroonahan; the substance of it was this:—The rock had at one period, a very remote one of course, been the only spot in the world favoured by the presence of the Fetish; and though this presence was now diffused over the whole world, the rock was the centre from whence it diverged; and this was proved by the quantities of white storks, the representatives of the deity of their valley, which built their nests on its sides. As a protection against evil Fetish, there had been imparted to it the property of becoming invisible to the eye of man or beast whenever the safety of its sacred inhabitants might be endangered. And thus, should the town be at any time taken by an enemy, the people could flee to its sanctuary and be perfectly secure.

The valley, or mountain recess in which the town stood, formed by far the fairest portion of the kingdom of Allaroonah. It lay from north to south, and was

about ten English miles in length, and somewhat of a wedge shape, having a basis of five to six miles, across which was drawn a range of low round-topped hills clothed with rank grass and brushwood; beyond these was a Champaigne country, barren and unpleasing in appearance, nature seeming to have withheld her best gifts from it, in order that she might bestow them with a lavish hand upon a spot more favoured; for when the traveller had attained the crest of these hills a view broke on his vision, presenting a picture of majesty combined with sweetness such as is seldom seen in any land, and least expected in Western Africa. The eye of the fascinated beholder first fell upon the level ground, a cultivated strip that ran up the centre of the valley, and through which meandered many an irrigating rill, whose precious fluid was raised from wells dug in the sandy bed of the water course.

Bordering upon this garden, and sloping from it on either hand, with a gentle ascent to the more rugged ground beyond, was a belt of turf of the richest verdure, and studded with magnificent trees, either standing alone, at almost equal distances from each other, or collected in clumps as though man had been

exerting his utmost skill to decorate the scene: but it was all the work of nature's hand. This park-like ground became more undulating as it receded from the river's bed; the gentle downs swelling like the unbroken rollers that sweep the Southern Atlantic, until it almost reached the foot of the mountain chain, where it mingled with and became lost among huge detached blocks of granite that had fallen from the precipices which rose to a great height behind them.

As the valley contracted, the mountains increased in grandeur, and towered up, pile upon pile, until their peaks seemed inaccessible to human feet. No outlet could be discerned leading northward to the regions beyond, the rocky barrier appearing to cut off all communication at that end. This, however, was not the case; for, on closer inspection, a pass or gorge, a mere cleft caused by some convulsion of nature, opened a road through the mountains, but which, in the rainy season, was rendered impassable by the rushing through it of an impetuous torrent. Ravines, growing less deep as they attained the more lofty regions, diversified the otherwise sterile mountains with rich streaks of vegetation. The scant soil at the commencement of these hollows afforded nourishment to stunted shrubs and

grasses only, but which in the lower parts were superseded by plants of a more vigorous growth, and they in turn gave place to giants of the vegetable world, such as luxuriate in a tropical clime. Noble forest trees and thickly entangled bushes here lent their shelter to large flocks of birds of the most dazzling plumage; whilst in their darkest shade, the lion and sleek coated panther awaited in drowsy watchfulness the approach of night. For a great portion of the year, even long after the rains had ceased, the pleasing murmur of falling waters might be heard, leaping in cascades from rock to rock, their margins decked with a profusion of flowers that vied in splendour and variety of colours with the gay butterflies that filled the air with their countless myriads. Nor was this all—a banquet was ready spread, one of Nature's providing, consisting of tropical fruits which grew in perfection, and spontaneously, delighting the senses by their delicate perfume and delicious taste.

It would seem as though the curse of man's first sin had not extended to this spot, but that all, unlike the common world without, was in its pristine loveliness and innocence. The thought is pleasing, but deceptive: for, upon a more close examination,

it will be found that these very woods are one vast lair for beasts of prey, each of which is the savage and insatiable enemy of every creature weaker than itself; that from beneath a loose stone or fallen leaf may dart a reptile, whose dread bite would arrest the steps of the incautious passer by, and speedily terminate his earthly career; whilst the cool of the evening fills the air with swarms of insects, minute chastisers of man and beast, or calls forth from their hiding places crawling things, loathsome to the eye and cold to the touch. And thus it is that our illusion is dispelled by reality, and our earthly Paradise so cruelly destroyed.

The history of Allaroonah—like that of most other barbarous kingdoms, or half-civilized tribes, whose only annals are the traditions that have been handed down from father to son, or are contained in exaggerated records of a few leading events that may have become the theme of their rude minstrels—is involved in obscurity, and can only be traced, with anything like authenticity, through a few generations, after which all becomes lost in the confusion of the narrator's memory, or buried beneath a multitude of absurd fables. The ancestors of Soo-Mah, the king of Allaroonah, had long held sway there as inde-

pendent sovereigns, and from the peculiar nature of their country, could defy the power of the small neighbouring states, and issuing at unawares from the valley, chastise their enemies without fear of retaliation.

The pass that penetrated the northern mountains had, from time immemorial, poured an exhaustless stream of wealth into the royal treasure; for a toll was imposed upon every traveller, and all merchandise passing through it paid a tax, varying in amount according to the cupidity or caprice of the monarch. Soo-Mah, like many of his royal predecessors, had sometimes broken faith with the merchants, extorting goods from them on various pretences; but as this was the most direct, and probably the safest route for the commerce of the interior to reach the eastern part of the kingdom of Ashantee, it still continued to be much frequented.

The king's age was entirely apocryphal, and rested solely on the testimony of his older courtiers, who excelled even their more civilized brethren of Europe and Asia in the art of flattering princes. According to the statement of these parasites, their royal master had not yet seen fifty summers, and this he affected

to believe; but, judging from his countenance, he could not be less than sixty years of age. There was nothing in his personal appearance that gave dignity to his royal rank, being rather low in stature, and, perhaps, to an European eye, a little too corpulent. He possessed, in a marked degree, the peculiar features and short woolly hair that characterize the natives of that portion of Western Africa. Nor was it in person alone that he was a faithful representative of his race, for though affable to all, still there was a deep vein of cunning concealed beneath his courtesy; and this he often made serviceable to attain his ends. Covetous in the extreme, he could stoop to the meanest of actions to obtain a fine garment; and would then subject himself to excessive fatigue, in order to display his ill-gotten splendour before his admiring subjects—his barbarian vanity overcoming his naturally lethargic disposition. Cruelty was not among the number of his sins, for when he obtained the Stool of State, he immediately forbade the sacrificing of human beings to the Fetish.

His household comprised a great number of persons, amongst whom were above a hundred female slaves; the mother of the heir apparent being alone honoured with even the semblance of the privileges of a wife;

for the sovereignty of Allaroonah descended from father to son, and not, as in many of the other African States, to the oldest brother of the late king, or, he failing, to the oldest nephew. The head slave or wife was chosen either for high birth or great beauty, more commonly the former; but should a considerable time elapse without her presenting her lord with a son she lost his favour, and another more fortunate supplanted her.

The person second only to the king in importance was the President from the Court of Dahomy, to which country Allaroonah had for two years paid tribute. This was not owing to Soo-Mah being more indolent, or less powerful than his ancestors, but because no such formidable neighbours as the Dahomans had ever risen to threaten them. For whilst the small kingdom of Allaroonah had remained the same for many generations, neither increasing nor diminishing its territory, that of Dahomy had raised itself, gradually at first, and afterwards by rapid strides, to hold the most absolute sway of any State in that part of Western Africa. Nation after nation was absorbed by it: and should the inhabitants of these countries not succumb at the first summons, but

attempt to defend their lives and liberty, they were overwhelmed by the superior numbers of the Dahomans, and either extirpated or sold into slavery. Victory followed victory in such quick succession that in the haughtiness of conquest even Ashantee itself had been threatened.

The cruelties perpetrated by these warriors rendered their name formidable throughout the whole of Guinea. The nobler beasts of prey were not so savage; for these only kill in order to allay the pangs of hunger, and not as will a pack of wolves, who, after satiating their appetites on the defenceless sheep, slay hundreds more in mere ravenous sport; for so did the Dahomans. Ferocious beyond any former example recorded in modern history, their empire was established in blood, and had to be maintained by the slaughter, annually, of thousands of innocent victims. Power acquired by the sword must be maintained by its means; and under a government solely military, whether in civilized Europe or barbarous Africa, a love of martial fame and warlike deeds obliterates every other affection; and peaceful occupations are left in the hands of the lowest of the people. Man has tasted the blood of his fellow-man;

and like a tiger that has so done will not be content with common food.

Two-thirds of the public revenue of the now powerful empire of Dahomy are raised by the sale of slaves. These slaves are disposed of either to the white dealers or to African merchants who convey them across the desert to Egypt and the Barbary Coast. They are obtained in two ways—by annual hunts, and as tribute from conquered States—the former of these expedients being the most acceptable to the chiefs: for, whilst keeping up the warlike spirit of the people, it deters them from becoming attached to other pursuits; and to aid this sort of feeling agriculture and commerce are discountenanced, or altogether prohibited. Nor is this unnatural state of things confined to the men; the love of war having imbued the opposite sex; and thousands of Amazons always accompany the king on his military expeditions—realizing in our own age the stories of the Ancients.

The wealth of the Allaroonahans had long been known to their immediate neighbours, and the fame of it at length reached Abomey, the Dahoman capital, where this alone was sufficient to cause it to be "asked for" at one of the Customs. During these festal

periods the ministers and officers in the army had the privilege of asking for war against any particular town or country. To this request the king might accede at any time during two years; but if he allowed this period to elapse, and the army were unanimous on the subject, it could in the third year be claimed as a right, and was then beyond the power of the monarch's refusal.

It was on such an occasion, and in the usual manner, that one of the female warriors had asked for Allaroonah; but as there were towns and villages numerous enough to supply several years slave hunts without going so far from Abomey, a messenger was secretly despatched by the king to treat with Soo-Mah. Upon the arrival at Allaroonah of the Dahoman ambassador, whose name was Nar-Chez, a council of all the chiefs and warriors had been called. After the long ceremonies of reception were concluded, Nar-Chez opened the palaver by saying that there was in Dahomy a lion which ere long would lack food; and therefore the warriors of that country had sent to ask the people of Allaroonah whether their jackals would hunt game for him among the mountains? For, if not, the lion, who had already

licked his lips at the mention of their name, might come himself; and if so, who could escape? The answer returned was, that though there was no game upon the mountains, the jackals were willing to descend into the plains, and there hunt along with the lion.

This was considered satisfactory; and the amount of tribute being arranged, the ambassador returned to Abomey, and one of the king's brothers, whose name was Hoo-Roon, was sent to reside at Allaroonah, and to have a voice in the councils of state. In this double capacity of minister and spy, he made himself fully acquainted with the military resources of the nation, and the wealth of the chiefs. His treachery, or as a statesman would term it *finesse*, was boundless, and his cupidity insatiable; qualities that soon earned for him the hatred of all classes of Allaroonahans, especially of the common people, who looked upon the treaty that Soo-Mah had made with their enemy as one unbecoming a free nation.

CHAPTER II.

"Even in barbarism there is yet grandeur of feeling, and it even contains elements of poetry: memories few but forcible, and purposes accordant and interwoven with them." RANKE.

IT is a relief to the mind to turn from a picture in which perfidy and cruelty alone are pourtrayed, and where reason is made the consenting handmaid to vice, and contemplate, if only for a few moments, a more pleasing scene. The heir-apparent to the throne of Allaroonah was a youth of about eighteen summers, at the period when his father became tributary to the Dahoman monarch. But in a tropical climate a young man of that age is looked upon as a person of much more consequence than he of a corresponding one in the temperate zones. And more frequently than otherwise the youthful African, especially if he be the son of a chief, or free man, may be said to have then fairly commenced life on his own account; being not only established in a hut and possessing wives and slaves,

but also allowed to rank as a warrior—and in some respects this was the position then held by the young Allaroonahan.

From a mere child he had been trained in every art of war: the bow and spear were his playthings throughout boyhood; and though as he advanced in years he became a proficient in the use of a more deadly weapon, the musket of the white men, he ever retained a partiality for the arms of his forefathers. Unlike most youths of his race, he was fond of every athletic sport: loving to ramble amongst the mountains that overhung his native valley in quest of game, or scale the craggy rocks to carry off the eaglets from the eyry, or shoot by stealth the antelope as they browsed the luxuriant bushes. But his greatest delight was in that which combined danger with pleasure: such as following the footprints of a leopard, or tracking a lion to his lair. On expeditions like these he had seldom more than one or two attendants, for few had sufficient courage to follow where he led. When, however, he returned, bearing the spoils he had stript from his noble prey, as he often did, with what raptures was he greeted by old and young.

And thus he imperceptibly and unconsciously stole

away the hearts of his father's subjects; not by honeyed words and specious promises, as did of old the best loved son of Israel's warlike king, but through deeds of heroism and daring, than which nothing is so captivating to the minds of a barbarous people.

In figure he was tall and muscular, his countenance betokening a brave man, and so a generous, and gave promise that he would one day become a great warrior. His negro descent showed itself in his features, but in so slight a degree as to deprive them in a great measure of that peculiar expression so common among his fellow-countrymen. His hair, though not soft, was sufficiently long to fall in curls below his cap of red cloth. But the most distinguishing feature about him was the colour of his eyes, which were of a pale but brilliant blue. This was an occurrence so rare that until the age of twelve he was known by no other name than that of Woo-hung, "the blue-eyed;" his exploits, however, as a hunter gained for him a more significant title. One evening when returning from a successful encounter with a king of the forest, he had thrown the skin over his shoulders, and the shaggy mane hanging down concealed his dress: as he passed on the people shouted "Kennee-Voo! Kennee-Voo!"

meaning "the young lion"—a name he ever after retained. The hearts of many of his father's warriors beat quick with joy when they thought of the day their "young lion" would lead them on to war, and, they doubted not, to victory.

His voice was the only one heard in the council condemnatory of the treaty made with the king of Dahomy; for though so young he displayed a sagacity and foresight that betokened the dawning of a noble mind. He had easily detected the crafty policy that lay concealed to others beneath the guise of friendship, and exposed the true purpose of their cruel foe; nor did he hesitate to reproach, in no measured terms, the lethargy of the chiefs to whom a life of ease, however degrading, seemed preferable to the exertion required to maintain their freedom. This language, though bold, and perhaps imprudent, pleased many who were too timid to offer any opposition to the will of their sovereign, who possessed a power over life and death more absolute than the Russian Autocrat, and so might have prevented them from troubling him with unpleasant advice in future.

Such then, was Kennee, the pride and hope of Allaroonah. Would there had been many like him in

Western Africa, for then the white man could not have enslaved the negro, and the accursed sin would have been avoided—a sin the stain of which no sophistry can remove from the page of history. But unfortunately men such as he are few in number, and they more prone to use their superior talents to further the degradation rather than attempt the advancement of their fellow-countrymen. And this is rendered the easier by the great tractability, or, to speak more correctly, the extreme apathy of the mass of the people, amongst whom there does not appear to exist any feeling of the baseness of their position in the great family of man, and therefore no wish for change; their utter want of self reliance, and an abhorrence of mental exertion have brought them by degrees into a state of slavery, even in their native country and to their own chiefs.

The population of Allaroonah comprised in its numbers only about one-fifth free men, the rest being held in a sort of bondage; and among the latter class were included almost all the females. Seldom indeed did the husband regard his wives with the least show of affection, looking upon them as ministering only to his own comforts, and valuing them according to the

wealth they brought him by their toil. Nevertheless their bondage was little more than a name, and had in it none of the elements of American slavery; for so long as their lords had any cowries to spend they were allowed to do just as they pleased, leading a life of thoughtless indolence, and perhaps as really happy as it is possible for human creatures to be when existing without God and without mind.

Thus their blindness, in not seeing the gross ignorance in which they were living, might be so construed as to be regarded in the light of a blessing. And though a very small amount of additional labour would have materially increased their comfort, possessing as they did such natural advantages of climate and soil, it would in their estimation have been too dearly purchased. A proof of what could be effected was not wanting, nor need they have looked far for an example they would have done well to follow; for in the same valley with these slothful careless beings, heedless of to-morrow's privations, so that the yams and "olee" were provided for the day's sustenance and the evening's revel, was settled a small tribe or "family" of Fellatahs.

These people are by far the most interesting of all

the races of men who inhabit Western Africa; being not only distinct from every other in a physical relation, but also remarkable for their mental superiority, and the vast amount of social comforts they comparatively enjoy. The individuals of this family that are met with along the whole range of the Kong mountains are not the children of the soil, but a nomade people like the Bedouins, except the inhabitants of Yarraba, and like those wanderers possess large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, with which they move about from place to place as the approach of war may drive, or rich pastures tempt.

History gives us little information respecting their origin, being entirely without data; whilst the natural philosopher is equally meagre and unsatisfactory in his reasoning and attempts at explanation why a people excelling in habits of industry are found scattered amongst men so widely different, like crystals sparkling amid dull pebble stones. The particular tribe of Fellatahs who were located in the valley of Allaroonah had been settled there about twenty years, having first come by permission of Soo-Mah, on condition of their supplying his household with a stipulated quantity of milk and other produce of their pastoral labours.

The accidental arrival of this tribe in the valley was fraught with consequences, both to its own chief and the king of Allaroonah, which neither could possibly have foreseen: differing as they did in every habit, and almost in every disposition, it rendered the sequel most remarkable. A friendship sprang up between them, which in a short time ripened into an attachment so strong that to Soo-Mah it seemed like a new passion, having never felt an affection equal to it for any other person, not even his father: and what was still more singular in one of his race, it knew no abatement.

Though the chief had been some time married at the period of his arrival at Allaroonah, he had no child through whom the honours of his family might be transmitted to posterity: a circumstance regarded by his race as one of the greatest afflictions that can befal a man; for the Fellatahs are not addicted to polygamy. But when he had lived there about four years he was blessed with a daughter, who, on the day of her birth, was betrothed to one of the infant sons of Soo-Mah, he to whom the sovereignty of Allaroonah was to descend—a pleasing compact that caused the friendship of the two chiefs to be more firmly united;

gladdening their hearts as they watched year by year the opening promise of manly courage and feminine beauty afforded by the children.

To the natives of the valley the appearance among them of the Fellatahs was hailed with great rejoicing, for up to that time the only milk they had was what their goats yielded; and the kid, the swine, and sometimes the sacred sheep were the only animals whose flesh they tasted, except when a beast of prey was captured; but all these were delicacies upon which the chiefs alone could regale, and they but rarely, whilst to the slaves it had been forbidden food. Now, however, the case was altered; a calf or even a bullock was frequently slaughtered and given to the populace to make merry with.

The village inhabited by these interesting strangers was situated on the left or west side of the river's bed, about midway in the valley, and at a point where a rivulet gushing from a deep ravine in the mountains, in which it had collected its waters, meandered its limped course; sparkling and gurgling as it flowed along, it appeared to dance for joy upon first meeting the full light of heaven, for the source from whence it sprung was darkened, even at noon-day, by the over-

hanging rocks, or the luxuriant foliage of the trees and plants to which its own fertilizing waters gave nutrition.

Stretching on either hand were sloping downs, where large herds of cattle cropped the herbage, whilst flocks of sheep and goats nibbled the finer grass or browsed on the bushes that grew among the scattered rocks of the almost dry watercourse of the river, the tiny tributaries to which were not able to keep up its flow throughout the summer. The huts of the Fellatahs, unlike those built by the natives, were circular in form, and stood a little way removed from one another. Near each was a tall palm, the hut being so placed, that during the mid-day heat, when the sun shot down his all but vertical rays, a most delicious shade was cast over it. Nothing could look more picturesque than this scene of pastoral life, where all was peace; for the village had no sort of defence against the attack of marauders, relying upon the vicinity of Allaroonah for protection, and to which the inhabitants could easily flee in case of danger. Against beasts of prey, however, they had at certain seasons of the year to wage deadly strife: pens were constructed of the slender stems of young trees, bound together with strips of hide, and into these the cattle were driven each night during the

rainy season; for at that period the low country to the southward of the valley became converted into a swamp, forcing the wild animals to seek shelter in the hill country where they prowled about in vast numbers; and not unfrequently, the villagers would be startled at the dead of night by the roar of a lion, who, emboldened by hunger, had lept the lofty stockade, from which he might be seen the next moment rebounding with a sheep or even a larger animal in his powerful jaws.

The religion of these Fellatahs was the Mahomedan, though not in its purest form; and the chief, who was styled "Sheik," being able both to read the koran and also to write sentences from it, was looked up to as a person of the greatest sanctity by every member of his tribe except one, and that one the wife of his bosom; this was not because she knew him better than others did, but because she knew of the undefiled worship of God. The wanderings of the tribe had extended over the country lying between Soccatoo and Sierra Leone; and it was whilst near the latter place that she had frequent opportunities of seeing and conversing with white men. From an English Missionary she first heard of the Christian Religion, to which she became a

convert, not in name only but also in heart; for when removed far beyond the influence that first produced the happy change, she still retained her faith in Christ, though she could only worship Him in secret. To induce her husband to forsake the religion of his fathers for that embraced by herself, she knew would be a task greater than she could accomplish, and years passed on without her being able to impart the saving knowledge to any; but after the birth of her child the void was removed, and the sole hope and aim of her life was to instil it to, and watch over its growth in, the infant's mind. In the accomplishment of this object she prospered; for good seed sown by a mother's hand rarely fails to produce its fruit in due season; and he to whom the dark skin of the African brings no condemnation looked down on the good work and vouchsafed a blessing.

The child had been named "Myha," or "The Fortunate," on account of the propitious events that happened about the period of her birth, and the exalted position she was destined to fill. As she grew in years and knowledge, and became able to mark the contrast that existed between Kennee and the other youths of his nation, which she had many opportunities of doing,

she did not repine at the contract that had been made for her, or dread the idea of one day becoming his. And often would a feeling of joyous, innocent pride possess her youthful heart when he, her boy lover, brought the spoil of some daring deed, some exploit in the dark glen or on the mountain crags, and laying it at her feet, kneel to receive from her lips the praise of his toil; but when the prey was a leopard's cub, or a young antelope that had strayed from its mother's side, her joy would be shown in a more acceptable reward than mere praise.

She was younger than he by two years, causing her to regard him, even from infancy, as a being much superior to herself; and though in early life their intercourse had been that of brother and sister, yet, as she ripened in years, a maidenly reserve gradually took the place of the innocent playfulness of childhood, a deportment the more pleasing to Kennee since it contrasted so strongly with that of the young girls of his father's court; and as time passed quickly away the youthful pair began to live more for each other, and a passionate fondness assumed its sway over their minds.

Myha was about thirteen years of age when the brother of the king of Dahomy first arrived at Alla-

roonah, and her opening charms gave assurance that the promises of infancy would be more than realised in a beauty not often possessed by any of Eve's daughters, and rarely indeed to be found amongst those of Africa. But it must not be forgotten that she was a Fellatah, between which race and the negro there exists, as has been already stated, a marked distinction, physical as well as moral.

Kennee had not availed himself of a privilege which his age and rank entitled him to—of living in his own hut, and possessing a number of wives—but was still residing in his father's palace; and in this he was an exception to the generality of his fellow-countrymen, to whom marriage was little more than the purchase of a slave. Myha was his only delight, and he loved her with a truthfulness the sincerity of which was tested and proved by the pain of a temporary separation from the object of it, which occurred during the second year of his father's treaty with the king of Dahomy. The purpose of this was the leading of two thousand Allaroonahan warriors to join that monarch in an approaching war; he having chosen to call for this aid rather than for the slaves he could have demanded by the agreement of the previous year. The young chief knew

not that he was about to risk his life in the cause of aggression—to spend his courage in a slave hunt. He had been led to believe that the object of the war was the chastisement of the enemies of his own country and Dahomy, and the hope of distinguishing himself in so just a cause raised his ardour to an extreme degree.

The tribe against whom they fought had received intelligence of their approach, and defended themselves with the energy of despair; many refusing the offer of life, chose death rather than slavery. The Dahoman army was more numerous than the enemy; but in spite of this, and the terror of their name, the issue of the contest was at one time doubtful; the praise of the ultimate victory being shared between the soldiers of the "mayo," or prime minister, and those under Kennee's command, to the latter of whom an unwonted courage had been imparted by the conduct of their leader. Two regiments of Amazons had wavered, and upon the whole the female warriors had not fought with their accustomed bravery. His Dahoman majesty, pleased with the heroic bearing of his young ally, immediately upon the return of the army to Abomey, created him a general of one of his own regiments, thus adding hatred to feelings of jealousy which his

noble actions had fostered in the minds of many of the Dahoman officers.

Kennee returned to his mountain home flushed with victory, and proud of the honours his achievements had won for him. Little did he imagine how much envy they had given birth to: an envy which his enemies would not allow to die, but by brooding over, and instilling into the hearts of others, produce from it a cause for hastening the downfall of his already doomed nation. The fame he had acquired rankled in the breasts of the abashed officers until their minds became inflamed with an intense desire for revenge. This feeling was the strongest amongst the Amazons, who regarded it as a slur upon their conduct during the war, and this spirit having got the better of their judgment, they had the imprudence to ask a second time for war against Allaroonah, though it was evident to all that the king was pleased with the behaviour both of Soo-Mah and his son. A few of their officers were picked out and tried by the king in person, ostensibly for cowardice, but really for being the fomentors of a movement displeasing to his Majesty; some were degraded from their several commands, whilst others had their heads struck off.

Thus the agitation was silenced for a time; and though every one appeared to have given up the point, the severity of the king's judgment had in reality only tended to make the discontented determined to have a fuller revenge; but how to effect this was a subject of much debate. One of the conspirators went secretly to Allaroonah, in order to sound Hoo-Roon, the king's brother, as to his views in the affair, and if possible to buy him over. The crafty Hoo-Roon, a true Dahoman, whose mind was deeply versed in every sort of vice and cunning, at once divined the object of the mission, though the message was wrapped in an ambiguity of language over which an European diplomatist might have pondered in vain. He gave his hearty concurrence to the endeavour to obtain war; and promised to gain over his brother to their views; but at the same time did not fail to stipulate for the bribe with which his perfidy was to be rewarded.

It was not long before Hoo-Roon had devised a plan by which to accomplish his object. His discernment had shown him that the king of Allaroonah would attempt to preserve peace upon almost any terms; and that on the other hand the young chief, who always took honour and not expedience for his guide, had from

the first advocated resistance against foreign interference; and therefore he cast his eyes upon him, intending to make this spirit of uprightness subservient to his own ends. But there was another circumstance in connection with the young warrior with which he had become acquainted, namely:—the great love he showed for the daughter of the Fellatah chief; nor had he failed to notice the surpassing beauty of the damsel; and in these he hoped to find the means of working out his diabolical designs.

He called to recollection the power his sovereign possessed of taking to himself any female in his dominions, neither rank nor age being allowed to interfere with the royal wish. And upon learning that the maidens of any town or province excelled in personal charms, he would issue a command that a certain number of the most beautiful should be selected, and conveyed to one of the royal palaces at Abomey: His Majesty then chose out such as pleased his fancy, and the others he either sold or bestowed upon his favourite ministers. Now Hoo-Roon was quite certain that the young chief would risk everything, even life itself, rather than see his betrothed carried off to become the slave of one whom he looked upon as the

bitterest foe of his country. He accordingly despatched one of his suite to Abomey with a present for his brother, consisting of a hundred male slaves. The messenger was instructed by Hoo-Roon to mention, as though by accident and not as coming from himself, the comeliness of the Allaroonahan women, and to expatiate more particularly on the great beauty of the Fellatah maiden. The mission was accomplished so successfully, that the royal mind became inflamed with a strong desire to possess a slave endowed with so many charms as she of whom he had just heard so glowing a description; he therefore sent at once to his brother to learn if what had been told him about the Allaroonahan maidens was truth. This was what Hoo-Roon expected he would do, and of course confirmed all that the messenger had stated; adding as his own testimony, that "the goats of the mountains were more graceful than the antelopes of the plains;" "but," he remarked, "as this was the first time the Allaroonahans had ever had the honour of conferring their daughters upon His Majesty, they might think it too high a distinction, and so be induced to decline a compliance on the ground of unworthiness; he would therefore recommend that the royal wish should be

conveyed in language so explicit as to leave them no ground for such a plea."

The king of Dahomy had awaited the return of the messenger with an impatience that boded ill to him, should he be the bearer of any tidings that might dispel the bright anticipations, or tend to delay the consummation of his desires; consequently it was with unfeigned delight that he received his brother's reply. A minister of the very highest rank in the kingdom was chosen to conduct the affair, and immediately despatched to Allaroonah on his delicate mission. This man was Nar-Chez, he who had drawn up the treaty so displeasing to Kennee, and who was now the bearer of a still more unpleasant demand. Besides a thousand Amazons under the command of their general, there were several hundred slaves, who carried every thing requisite for the secret conveyance of the precious treasures of which the Amazons were sent to be the guardians. Nor was this an unusual or unnecessary precaution; for should any man in the kingdom of Dahomy be so unfortunate as to cast his eyes, even by accident, on the captive maidens ere they had passed before the royal gaze, death would be his doom.

CHAPTER III.

"Why here once more in solemn council sit?
Ye young, ye old, the weighty cause disclose:
Arrives some message of invading foes?
Or say, does high necessity of state
Inspire some patriot, and demand debate?"

POPE'S ODYSSY.

THOUGH Soo-Mah had not relinquished one of the superstitions in which his ancestors had placed implicit faith, and in which, being a Fetishman himself, he was a firm believer, yet would he sometimes join his friend, the Fellatah chief, in the outward observance of Mahometan customs and ceremonies. Often had the old man urged Kennee to follow the example of the king his father, hoping that by degrees he might be brought into the number of the "faithful." Hitherto, however, he had failed to convince the youth of the superior excellencies of Mahomet over the Fetish; "For," he would reply, "we believe in a Great Spirit as well as you; and that he made all things: and like you we believe that there is to be another state of existence

after death. But here we begin to differ; for your religion teaches that punishments will be inflicted according to the amount of evil committed in this life; whilst ours, with the greater charity, looks only to the good deeds; and upon them will depend the proportion of happiness we shall enjoy. You think too that the Great Spirit hears your prayers only when addressed to Him through a man like yourselves, one who was buried before either your fathers or grandfathers were born—how then can he know you? As to our Fetish, we can talk to them; and they tell us what we are to do. I therefore see no reason why I should forsake the religion of my fathers."

The old chief was not the only person to whom the idolatry of the young warrior had become a subject of deep solicitude: the lovely Myha entertained a hope that her God would one day be his also: a pleasurable thought in which she often indulged without at first reflecting in what manner it was to be realized. How faint became that hope when she remembered that if this change were wrought it must be wrought by herself: she had none to look to for aid: to her father she had not dared to mention the subject; and even he, her own Kennee, was ignorant of her disbelief in the

Mahometan faith. It was the only thing she had ever kept back from him; and frequently during his absence at the war she reproached herself with this want of confidence. "Why should I not reveal everything," she asked herself, "for if the narration of a dream, or of my simplest action gives him happiness, how much greater will be his joy when I tell him of my most constant and deepest thoughts."

And she did tell him. But before listening to her gentle pleading, let us endeavour to pourtray her as she then appeared; for never was strange faith unfolded by a more lovely missionary. Man with presumptuous and imperfect knowledge is often tempted to attribute a degree of partiality to the mysterious workings of nature: for he finds some genera amongst plants or trees, and some species amongst animals possessing a symmetry of form, or a beauty of flower and foliage, the contemplation of which is one of his greatest delights; whilst the apparent deformity of others gives him pain, or excites his merriment by their grotesqueness. Nor does he stop here; but ascends to the various families of man, which are found differing so widely from each other that some persons, ashamed to own the Bushman or the Negro for a brother, have

attempted, though unsuccessfully, to prove that white skin and black have not had a common origin. There could not be a more conclusive proof of the fallacy of this style of reasoning than to find among the condemned families such a race as the Fellatahs, who may truly lay claim to be classed amongst nature's favourites: the men being handsome, well-formed, and intelligent; and the females enjoying a larger portion of the graces and charms of their sex than many who boast of fairer complexions; and in Myha, even as a child, there seemed to be no lack of these gifts. For, as we may observe through the transparent calyx of some yet unfolded bud, a faint trace of colouring that brings before our minds the beauty with which the flower that is forming there will one day be decked, so in like manner were her maturer graces foreshadowed by an early beauty.

As she advanced in years, and as the eagerness to please, which so well becomes a child, gradually gave place to maidenly bashfulness, each feature appeared to attract that particular charm which would lend to it the most loveliness. Her figure was naturally graceful, but rendered even more so by the style of her dress, which on ordinary occasions, or whilst attending to her

domestic duties, was composed of no costly material, yet gave it an air of almost classical beauty; at times, however, these simple habiliments were laid aside, and then she might be seen arrayed as became the betrothed of a king's son; and on these occasions her dress consisted principally of a garment of fine texture, which being collected at the waist by a scarf of embroidered silk, the produce of her own loom, flowed down to the ancle, where it terminated, and thus left uncovered her small and exquisitely moulded feet. A robe of costly material, the gift of Kennee, and purchased from the foreign merchants, hung in loose drapery from her shoulders; and was so constructed, that leaving the arms free it fully displayed the symmetry of the wearer. The only ornaments she wore were massive rings of gold encircling her ancles, and lighter ones of the same metal as bracelets. The sparkling river of her own sunny valley had yielded these treasures to deck one of its fairest daughters.

Myha's was not an imperious beauty, and though it won all hearts it would little have become an Empress Catherine, or a Cleopatra; but rather like that of Queen Esther, when sueing for some deed of

mercy, it needed only to be looked upon, and much that her voice would have asked was granted ere the words were heard. To no single feature could this pleasing expression be wholly ascribed, for each contributed to the charm. Long lashes shaded her eyes, and were of jetty hue, as were the lustrous orbs they guarded; and also her hair, soft and glossy, wrought on each side in tasteful folds, after the manner of her nation, and carried to the back, where it was intertwined with a small silken kerchief, generally of a delicate blue, the fringed points of which hung down a little way. An open net of golden thread restrained her flowing hair; and though it confined it could not conceal its profusion.

And thus was she, attired on the evening when she first revealed to Kennee the one great thought of her mind. He had gone, according to his custom, to spend a portion of the day with her; the fine turf that grew beneath the shade of a wide branching tree was their couch, their retreat an elevated spot from whence Myha could observe the shepherdesses as they tended their numerous flocks or milked the goats, for these were under her own especial care. In attendance, but a little way apart, was one of her maidens: she had

brought the carpet on which her mistress sat, it was the tawny skin of a lion slain by the hand of him who reclined at her side.

They had been conversing of the mystery of their own existence, and, led on by this discourse, Myha gave utterance unawares to words which had often before been on her lips, but each time had her heart hitherto misgiven her. "How noble a thought it is," said she, "for man to reflect that the great God who created him, and made the world on which he lives, is always ready to hear his every prayer, if offered to Himself alone, even had it not passed beyond the adorer's mind."

Kennee was not a little surprised at hearing such a sentiment from his companion. Such an idea had never before presented itself to him; and if it were true of what use could it be to offer up prayers either to his Fetish or her Mahomet? For a few moments he scarcely knew whether to be angry or not: but when his eyes met those of Myha, directed as they were full into his own, and he saw her countenance beam with a look of so earnest a supplication as to impart even to it an unusal degree of sweetness, his displeasure vanished.

Encouraged by the silence, and the half approving

smile, for so she interpreted it, of her lover, Myha was about to enter more fully into that at which she had merely hinted, when Kennee anticipated her, saying, "But, my Myha, the Great Spirit, whom you call 'Alla,' and worship through your prophet Mahomet, would not listen to supplications addressed to him except they were first offered to that prophet."

"Oh, yes, Kennee," exclaimed she, "I know that he hears and answers the prayers of the white men; and if so, I am sure he will listen to ours also, for are we not as near and as dear to Him as they?"

At the mention of white men, Kennee's brow became contracted; for he had heard whilst at Abomey that they bought, or carried off by force, many thousands of his own race every year; and loading them with chains drove them into large canoes, and took them to countries beyond the great water, where they either devoured them at their feasts, or made them toil for the rest of their lives. All this, and much more, did he relate to his companion. "And thus," continued he, "the God of the white men is not my God; nor can he be yours, Myha, for you do not love cruelty."

Myha was not prepared to hear such an account of the white men; but after a little reflection she remem-

bered that it was true of some of them. "But do these men," enquired she, "live in a town on the shore of the great water, just by here, where the sun sets?"

"No," replied Kennee; "they leave their canoes at the mouths of the rivers, and go to Abomey and Coomassie to buy slaves."

"Then these are not the white men amongst whom my mother passed so many years," said Myha with a feeling of joy that again reanimated her countenance. "They did not want slaves, but spent their whole lives in rescuing them from those who took them; for, having great canoes themselves, and being all warriors, they had only to ask and the captives were given up; and being taken to the large town were clothed and set free, and then they told them of the only God; and it was the God of these white men my mother worshipped, and taught me to do so too; and, O! Kennee, may I not continue to worship him? and will not you if I teach you how, and tell you of all that he has done for us?"

The blood mantled her cheeks when she concluded her earnest appeal, and shone through their dark complexion tinging them with a rosy hue.

Kennee shook his head. "I know that the Great

Spirit hears our Fetish men; and that the Fetish have power to work us evil if we disbelieve what they tell us," replied he: "as to the God of these white men we can neither see nor hear him."

Whilst he was speaking, a stork, the representative of the Deity of Allaroonah, came towards the place where they were seated; to which Kennee began to address supplications for protection and favour; using language expressive of fear and adoration. To slay one of these sacred birds, even accidentally, was a crime often punished by death, should he who killed it be a slave; and if a chief, by a heavy fine to the Fetish men. This immunity from danger, as far as man was concerned, had rendered them so tame that they would alight in any part of the town, even without manifesting the slightest signs of timidity; strutting about the courts and streets as though perfectly conscious of their superiority over the human inhabitants; and thus he scarcely deigned to cast a glance at the royal suppliant.

However, as he continued stalking about beneath the tree under which the lovers reclined, the keen eye of an eagle had penetrated the leafy shade, and swooping along the ground bore his godship high into the air in his talons. Without a moment's reflection Kennee

took an arrow from its quiver, and bending his bow with all his strength sent the swift messenger after the sacrilegious bird of prey. The weapon went true to its quarry, and both birds descending with the rapidity of a stone, fell at the young warrior's feet. But what was his horror when he saw that not the eagle alone had been hit, but that the shaft had transfixed the stork. He drew out the arrow, and trembling gazed at the expiring throes of his Fetish.

The eagle had not received a mortal wound, but speedily recovering from his fright was enabled, from the declivity of the ground, to rise into the air. Kennee's hand shook as he again drew his bow, and the arrow this time fell harmless to the ground.

What an opportunity was this for the gentle Myha to prove to him the folly of worshipping such a god: but there was no air of triumph in her manner when, seating herself at his feet, as he stood with downcast eyes, she took his hand in her own, and looking up into his face, said in a low voice, "could that bird, Kennee, have protected either of us from danger, or saved us from bondage?"

He answered her not, for though his gaze was now directed upon her countenance, which a look of enquiry made exquisitely lovely, he thought not of what he

saw: her sweet voice though now silent was still speaking to him; her words had entered his heart, and carried with them the first doubt he ever entertained of the truth of the Fetish. The doubt, however, was only momentary; a mind like his could not so easily relinquish the teaching of a life.

"It is not the bird, Myha, that I grieve for," said he, stooping down and kissing her forehead; "it is the displeasure of the Great Spirit."

Kennee had endued the religion of his fathers with more purity of sentiment than it was possessed of, either really or imaginary; and perhaps his fervour had been increased by what Myha had said. Reverently taking up the sacred bird he cut off its feet, a powerful charm against evil spirits, and fastened them to the silken cord on which his quiver was slung. He then produced from his bosom an amulet, without which, no person is considered to be under the protection of the Fetish: it consisted of a small strip of parchment on which a few words in Arabic characters were inscribed. These he repeated many times over, little imagining them to be a verse from the Koran.

Myha, who was sufficiently acquainted with that book to recognise the extract, saw at once the fraud that

had been practised by the priests, and which she was about to expose when their conversation was interrupted by the noise of drums and trumpets, whose discordant sounds came rolling up the hitherto peaceful valley, converting its stillness into the tumult of war. Myha started up, thinking the danger close at hand, but knowing whose protection to trust, she felt safe when Kennee's arm was her shield; and as she clung to his side, he almost wished for the danger she feared, that he might prove how much he loved her. They had not waited many moments before a procession of some hundreds of persons emerged into a glade at no great distance, and advanced towards them carrying boughs of peace and garlands in their hands.

Kennee was not long in discovering the ensigns they carried to be those of Dahomy, which having been once seen will ever be remembered; but as the company did not appear to have any hostile intention, he allowed Myha to remain until they approached near the spot where she stood, having a curiosity to see some of the female warriors; nor did she retire until their leader, who was some distance in advance of the rest, had saluted her.

Kennee had already recognised in him one of the

principal ministers in the Dahoman Court—Nar-Chez; and notwithstanding the feeling of aversion with which he beheld this individual, he greeted him with all the respect due to his exalted rank, which was fully displayed by the costliness of his dress and arms, the most gorgeous that his master could bestow, and sufficiently brilliant to satisfy the taste of the most extreme barbarian. Silks and satins of many hues bedecked his person; whilst from his ears and short flat nose hung pendants and rings of gold. A large party-coloured umbrella, borne by two female slaves, shaded his august head from the sun's rays.

After their greetings were concluded, the two warriors proceeded together towards Allaroonah; and upon passing the Fellatah village, Nar-Chez was very minute in his inquiries as to their numbers, wealth, and military discipline. As the procession approached the town, the drums were beaten with redoubled force, and the Amazons commenced the dance of peace, which they performed as they went along, firing off their muskets and uttering the most discordant yells. The scene appeared to Kennee a very incongruous one, and by no means pleasing. "If this is the dance of peace," thought he, "what must that of war resemble."

At a short distance from the walls the procession halted, Kennee going forward to acquaint the king of their arrival. It was not, however, until the sun had sunk behind the western mountains that a messenger came to conduct Nar-Chez to the royal presence. It is a custom amongst the nations of Western Africa for a host to mark the degree of respect in which a guest is held, by the length of time that is allowed to elapse before his reception; but the honour of waiting so long as Nar-Chez was permitted to do was never conferred except upon persons of great note; and Soo-Mah had been thus courteous to Nar-Chez, in order that he might show through him the great respect he entertained for his master, the king of Dahomy. This was merely a visit of ceremony, the next morning being fixed for a palaver, when the king in council would hear the object of his royal brother in thus honouring him with an embassy.

As twenty days only were to elapse before Myha was conducted to Allaroonah, the bride of its future king, the young chief seldom failed to visit her father's hut each day; but on that which followed the arrival of Nar-Chez, he was there much earlier than usual. After passing the night in a state of restlessness, fearing

some treachery from the Dahomans—whose numbers were unnecessarily large for a mere embassy—at the first glimpse of dawn he left the town, and wended his way down the valley. The dew still hung upon the flowers, whilst a delicious fragrance that rose from them perfumed the air, and all was peace around the Fellatah village. He found Myha busied in her domestic cares and pleasures, superintending her maidens who were receiving from the herdsmen calabashes of frothy milk, the reward of their early labours.

This accomplished, she seated herself at a loom containing a beautiful piece of work, which she was weaving from unravelled silk of variegated hues; and whilst plying her nimble fingers among the slender threads with an unerring exactness, she endeavoured, by bright smiles and cheerful conversation, to dispel the melancholy that hung on her lover's brow. Whether this depression was caused by his unfortunate deed of the previous day, or was merely a foreboding of evil, she knew not; but under the pleasing influence of her presence it speedily vanished, and the lovers spent the early morning in a sweet communion such as youthful hope alone can bestow.

From sun-rise, the drums of the Allaroonahans, as well as those belonging to Nar-Chez, had kept up an incessant roll; but when the firing of musketry commenced, Kennee knew that the chiefs were assembling for the council; and bidding adieu to Myha, he left the peaceful village with regret, and hastened to Allaroonah to be present at the palaver. The scene of it was the court-yard of the palace. At the side opposite the entrance, and seated under the verandah, was Soo-Mah, surrounded by his wives and ministers. The large open space in front was crowded almost to suffocation by the concourse of people; a small spot in the centre, before the stool of state, being reserved for Nar-Chez and his suite, who, upon Kennee's arrival, were ushered in. After a long time had been spent in the ceremonies of introduction and interchange of civilities, Soo-Mah hinted that his royal brother of Dahomy might perhaps have some object in sending so great a warrior thus far, and if so, he should be honoured by listening to it.

To this Nar-Chez replied that the sole object his sovereign had in contemplation was to promote the welfare of the king of Allaroonah, and to do him honour; and that as to himself, he could not help

feeling pleased at being styled a great warrior; still he thought himself unworthy of that title when in the presence of so many to whom it might be more appropriately given. He then proceeded in a long oration to unfold, in very flowery and ambiguous language, the real purpose of his mission, the substance of all these words being this:—"That the king of Dahomy having heard the fame of the beauty of the Allaroonahan women, who were said to surpass all others, even his own wives, in the multiplicity of their charms, had become possessed with a desire to see, and so judge for himself, whether this were so or not. He therefore desired that one hundred of the fairest daughters of the valley should be committed to the care of his minister Nar-Chez; but that above all he wished to behold a Fellatah maiden, the daugher of a chief of that race then sojourning in the kingdom of Allaroonah, who, he was told, was, even amongst the daughters of the land, like a gazelle among the mountain goats, full of grace and loveliness: and should this prove true it was his intention to admit her into the number of his wives, that in so doing he might confer the greatest honour it was in his power to bestow on his royal brother of Allaroonah.

Not a single muscle of Soo-Mah's face had changed whilst Nar-Chez was speaking; he was too well versed in the art of disguising his thoughts to allow them to be betrayed by the index of the mind. With Kennee, however, it was not thus; as the ambassador developed his mission he grew more and more indignant, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he could restrain himself. But when his own Myha was personally referred to, he rose and half drew the dagger from his belt. From the impenetrable gravity of the king, Nar-Chez augured neither good nor evil: but he had not failed to notice the emotion exhibited by the young chief, and exulted in his own mind at the almost certain success of his scheme. After a few more observations he took his leave, and the assembly remained to discuss the proposition that had just been heard by them; and a more important topic, or one with which the fate of their nation was so closely bound up, had never before been debated by the chiefs of Allaroonah.

Soo-Mah was the first to speak. He dwelt on the blessings of peace which they had so long enjoyed; talked much about the overwhelming power of the king of Dahomy; of his numberless warriors; and the good understanding that was said to exist between his

nation and the white men; and concluded by hinting his willingness to comply with the request of his royal brother.

The several chiefs followed according to their ages; each delivering himself of a great many words, but not saying anything to the purpose; proving that had they dared to express themselves without reserve, few would have been found on the side of the king.

At length the turn came for Kennee to speak. Those who had already done so had remained seated on their mats; but he was far too excited for this, and when he rose the buzz of whispering was hushed, and every eye among the vast multitude rested on the young warrior. He was their hope and pride; nor were their affections misplaced; for had he held a position in one of the kingdoms of Europe similar to that which it was his destiny to fill in Africa, he might have eclipsed the renown of many whose courage shines pre-eminent, and in nobleness of mind he was second to none. As he now stood before them, his figure, muscular but still symmetrical, was displayed to great advantage by a graceful tobe, that, thrown over the left shoulder, was caught up by a belt or sash under the right arm, which was thus left free.

Before he commenced speaking, his eyes ranged for a moment over the concourse of faces that met his gaze. "Is there here present," asked the young chief, in a slow and impressive tone, "a being, who, styling himself a warrior, will sit still and listen in consenting silence whilst the ambassador of a foreign tyrant dares to insult us by demanding for his master's palace our daughters, our sisters, and our betrothed maidens? If there be any such among the chiefs of Allaroonah, let them step forth that we may know them; and if we can find a hundred, we will send them to Abomey with the message that such are the only women we can spare; but this we shall not be able to do; there are no such cowards, such base cowards, at Allaroonah."

The warriors testified their approbation of Kennee's appeal by loud and long continued shouts.

"Should we consent to become the myrmidons of the Dahoman monarch," resumed he, "the mothers of our maidens would arm themselves to revenge their bereavement; and then indeed would Allaroonah be disgraced, and we should be lowered to the level of Dahomans, who allow their women to unwoman themselves, and glory in the extent of their shame. And you all know, my brothers, how few the deeds of cruelty and blood need

be to make the name of those we ought to love infamous; and that gentleness and virtue will alone render her noble, and keep her so. Let us not then force them to descend from the position they have ever held at Allaroonah, nor see them cast aside the domestic implements to grasp the spear and the sword. Some of you may, perhaps, remember what once befel me when attempting to rob an eyry of its eaglets —how, baffled by the parent birds, I drew back, and in the confusion of repulse missed my footing, dropping from ledge to ledge, still followed by the eagles and was only saved by a friendly bush. Or, on another occasion, how my young companions and myself came unawares on the lair of a lioness. I need not say we fled; we could not however do this so quickly but that she was able to imprint on my shoulder an indelible warning not to rouse a mother's ire by attempting to deprive her of her offspring, which by instinct she holds more dear than her life. So let it be now with us, nor scorn to copy what is good even from beasts and birds; but, as a nation of warriors, tell this tyrant, that sooner shall the daughters of Allaroonah be immolated to our Fetish than be the means of purchasing for us, by their slavery, an ignominious peace. But if

you are so sunk in indolence and cowardice as to be willing to part with your children and your honour, then shall this sword be stained with my Myah's blood and my own; for better far that we should perish than live to see our nation the mock and by-word of all people. Think not it is your virgins alone they want; it is your sons—it is you—it is me: if we give them a hundred slaves now they will demand a thousand by-and-by. Slaves are to them houses, clothing, yams, everything. For slaves they purchase merchandize of the white man; they were bartered to him for many of the gay but paltry cotton garments I see around me—presents from Dahomy; let them not, my friends, become bribes to fetter the arms of those who wear them. And why do we hesitate at all, or lose time in debate as to the answer we should return? If we be a nation of warriors, and our nation once was, there is only one reply we can give! Oh, then, my countrymen, let us awake; let us tell this cur to go back to him who sent him, with this message: 'The king of Allaroonah saith—Though the crows and the ravens be both of one colour, they do not pair together—he cannot give his daughters to his brother of Abomey.' And, as I draw this sword from its scabbard, I vow by the Fetish that should our

enemy attempt to obtain by force what he has failed to acquire by deceit, its only sheath henceforth shall be the bodies of his warriors."

No sooner had he ceased than shouts that rent the air rolled across the valley, and were echoed back by its mountain barriers that poured the joyful sound into the silent fastnesses, and startled the lion from its mid-day slumber. Nor was it long ere the strangers, who the previous day passed up the valley with the assurance and pomp of conquerors, might have been observed retracing their steps crest-fallen and mute.

CHAPTER IV.

"As when in summer, welcome winds arise,
The watchful shepherd to the forest flies,
And fires the midmost plants; contagion spreads
And catching flames infect the neighb'ring heads;
Around the forest flies the furious blast,
And all the leafy nation sinks at last;
And Vulcan rides in triumph o'er the waste."

DRYDEN'S VIRGIL.

NAR-CHEZ had assumed an air of disappointment that he was far from feeling, his design having been from the first to fail in his mission, and so bring war upon Allaroonah; and thus one part of his plot was already accomplished. The rich ornaments and dresses worn by Soo-Mah and many of his chiefs excited his cupidity; whilst the general comfort of the people gave promise of large rewards in the shape of plunder, some of which lay ready to his hand; for whilst descending the valley, the herds of cattle they saw on every side were a tempting prize to the Amazons, who would doubtless have driven off some had they not observed

Allaroonahan warriors hanging on their flank and rear, watching all their movements.

After getting clear of the territory of Allaroonah, Nar-Chez left the main body of his company, and taking only a few guards hastened towards Abomey, where he arrived, by forced marches, on the eighth day. It is a custom of the Dahoman nation for any one who has not succeeded in an undertaking connected with the state, or to have otherwise fallen under the displeasure of the monarch, to feign illness, and shut himself up in his hut; and if it be the judgment of the king that the offence must be punished by death, the chief executioner is sent to visit him, and he is no more heard of; should it be otherwise, however, the prime minister waits upon the sick man, bringing some trifling present from his master, and he is at once restored to health. Accordingly Nar-Chez retired to his hut, and sent a messenger to the mayo to inform him of his return, and that in consequence of the fatigues of the journey he was unwell.

The mayo immediately summoned the generals of the different regiments for a palaver, and repairing to the palace, demanded an audience of the king. When the usual prostrations had been performed by the whole

number, one of them requested permission to speak. This was granted, and having first thrown himself on the ground in front of the stool of state, and licked the dust, he opened the palaver by saying:—"If the king commanded us to fetch a star from the sky, though we his slaves would feel bound to obey, might we not first ask for wings?"

A murmur of approbation ran through the assembly; and his Majesty was also pleased to show his approval.

"If the king were to command us," said another, "to bring to Abomey by the next Customs a large canoe belonging to the white men, we should certainly do so: might we not, however, ask for a thousand Ashantees to draw it hither?"

His Majesty hereupon arose, and performed a war dance in token of his pleasure at hearing this observation. When he resumed his stool the applause ceased, and the mayo next took up the argument. "It is the duty of every warrior to obey the king in all things; he gives us war, but when he does this he also gives us muskets. The king commanded Nar-Chez to bring one hundred slave girls from the valley of Allaroonah. He went, but has returned unwell."

"Nar-Chez must lose his head then," said the

miegan, the chief executioner. "How many warriors did the king give him?"

"None, only a guard of Amazons," replied the mayo.

Here all the Amazon generals rose, thinking the prime minister intended this remark to be a reflection on their valour. The contention became so violent that muskets were discharged, and there seemed every probability of the palaver ending in bloodshed. Quiet was at length restored by the king expressing himself satisfied with the courage of his Amazons. He then decided that Nar-Chez should not lose his head; and he having been sent for to explain the cause of the failure of his mission, succeeded in doing this so as to convince all that he had done his duty. He concluded by extolling the beauty of the young girls of Allaroonah. As for the Fellatah maiden, he dared not confess that he had seen her himself, but only heard it said, "that a glance from her eye would subdue many hundreds of warriors."

"What Nar-Chez speaks may be true," said an Amazon; "a hundred soldiers may be overcome by one woman, but a thousand soldiers of Allaroonah could not take the head of a single Amazon."

"If the king will give me two thousand muskets, I

care not whether they be carried by soldiers or by Amazons, I will bring him a slave girl for every musket, and two heads for every slave girl from Allaroonah."

The palaver was brought to a termination by the king delivering a lengthy address; in the course of which he observed, "that as the eagles did not make choice of prey with the gaudiest plumage, so they ought not to be dazzled by the wealth of a town, but look rather to the number of slaves to be taken—that they should not hear it proclaimed in the market-place which country was to be given up to the next war; for before the lion makes his bound he must hunt against the wind, or the antelopes would get a sent of him; or when a man sets a pit-fall he does not let the elephant know where it is, but carefully conceals it. They must be like men who, looking at the forest trees, wonder which will be blasted when the thunder cloud bursts."

On the twentieth day from the departure of Nar-Chez from Allaroonah, a Dahoman messenger arrived on the border of that kingdom, and sent on to the capital a bough of peace, soliciting a safe conduct. This was granted, and the next morning he was admitted to an audience by the king. He was accompanied by two youths who might be of the ages of eight and ten years.

The purport of the embassage was to this effect, "that His Majesty of Dahomy could not have believed it possible that his brother of Allaroonah would so misconstrue the object he had in view in sending the late mission to his court as to dismiss it in an unfriendly and even hostile spirit. That so far from seeking war, it was the fondest wish of his life ever to remain at peace with one he so highly esteemed; and to prove the sincerity of his friendship, he had entrusted two of his children to the care of his brother of Allaroonah, that, being near the Young Lion, his son, they might imitate his courage, and be trained to feats of hunting."

Plausible as all this appeared, Soo-Mah was too old to be caught by it, even if he had not known the true state of affairs. He returned for answer, "that it did not take a wise man to distinguish a pebble from an ostrich egg. If the sons of the King of Dahomy were slaves, as those two he had sent him seemed to be, he could not teach them anything."

From a spy he learnt all that transpired at Abomey, and had already been informed that war was inevitable. Accordingly, he commanded Hoo-Roon, the Dahoman president, to return to his brother's court, and inform him that the Allaroonahans had been so long at

peace that they could no longer use the spear or the club.

A Dahoman army was within a few days march of Allaroonah at this very time; a circumstance with which Soo-Mah was perfectly acquainted; but so well had his preparations been made, and everything conducted with such secrecy, that Hoo-Roon, crafty as he was, had failed to detect them, and left Allaroonah under the impression that it was devoted to immediate destruction.

The invading army numbered two thousand persons; and was composed one half of soldiers, the other of Amazons, all picked warriors; the former under the command of Nar-Chez, who was also General-in-Chief; the latter of an officer of their own sex. Upon approaching the frontiers of Allaroonah, no drum or sound of warlike music was heard among their ranks, but the army moved on in silence, lest notice should be given of their approach. The country itself was well adapted to conceal the movements of a hostile force, being covered with brush wood and coarse grass that grew to the height of a tall man; and through these the wild animals had formed a labyrinth of passages, which, diverging from every point, intersected each

other and formed a complete maze of winding tracks. Towards the setting sun was a swamp, covering a considerable space of country; and this combined with the dry herbage, gave the whole scene an aspect of extreme sterility.

Such was the spot chosen by the Dahoman army for their last night's rest outside the valley of Allaroonah, and from which it was only separated by the range of hills that formed its southern boundary. Accident, however, rather than an eye to the military security of the position had thus placed them; for as it was not usual to carry on hostilities in the dark, they were seldom at the trouble of forming a regular camp, or even of posting sentries.

The night passed on in security, and every warrior lay hushed in sleep; nor was a sound heard except the voice of the beasts of prey, when suddenly, ere the day had begun to dawn, a brilliant light shot up from amongst the tall grass a short distance from the spot where the army lay. To this were speedily added many others, which, in an almost incredible space of time, united themselves into one continuous arc of flame, the line of which extended, from north to south, so far as to embrace the whole Dahoman army. At

that period of the year, every morning is ushered in by a gentle breeze which comes with the sun, and gradually rises to a strong wind, dying away before mid-day. Soo-Mah resolved that this should be made the bearer of death to his enemies. He it was who had kindled the flames, the light of which had anticipated the dawn, nor did the elements disappoint him; for as the fire increased in volume, so did the wind in violence, until each seemed to be vieing with the other how best to aid the Allaroonahans.

The half-awakened Dahomans now began to look about them. In the first moment of surprise they supposed it to be merely the signal fires of the enemy who had discovered their approach; but they were quickly undeceived; for as the gusts of wind came in contact with the flames they mutually aided each other; licking up the grass and bushes with the speed of a torrent; whilst every few moments a column of burning embers would be borne aloft in a whirlwind, and then scattered by the storm, fill the air with a shower of glowing dust. A dense cloud of white smoke, rising only a little above the tops of the brush wood, rolled on a short way in advance of the flames, giving additional horror to the scene. Whilst the

Dahomans stood gazing in mute astonishment as though charmed by the terrific spectacle, they were startled by the approach of several panthers that came bounding along in close proximity to a herd of affrighted antelopes. These were followed by a company of elephants, who, disdaining the beaten tracks, came crashing through the brittle bushes like a fleet of Roman galleys before a gale. The wolf and timorous gazelle seemed to have forgotten their instincts, for they fled side by side; nor did the buffalo and wild boar stay to measure their strength. Last in the race for life was the lion; his movements even now proclaiming his regal dignity; he retreated with sullen steps as if too proud to appear to fly; and lashing his tawny sides with his tail he would occasionally look back and roar defiance at the fiery foe.

The beasts of prey deigned not to cast a glance at their natural and heretofore dreaded enemy; nor was the desire of revenge sufficient to stay the rapidity of their flight. The smaller animals, however, such as hares and monkeys, acknowledged the supremacy of man; and crowding round him, sought protection from the hand they knew had the power to destroy. Bewildered by smoke, or dazzled by the light, the feathered

tribes flew into the flames and perished by hundreds; as for the reptiles, they did not attempt to fly, but buried themselves in the loose soil or crept under stones, where many were scorched to death by the heat imparted to the ground by the glowing embers which the exhausted flames left behind them. Most of the animals escaped; the elephants taking refuge in the friendly swamp; whilst the others, swift of foot, and taught by instinct, ran not directly before the advancing foe, but gradually verged towards the north or south, and so got beyond its influence; for such was the force of the wind, that the flames were swept along with a rapidity that allowed them not to spread either to the one side or the other, but carried them on in a direct line as though all else was incombustible. Man, however, was not so fortunate; just within this mystic boundary, and shrouded by the long grass, lay the watchful Allaroonahans; and no sooner had a Dahoman passed this line, and escaped as he thought from the jaws of death, than the spear of an enemy put an end to his delusive hope.

With so powerful an ally, there was little scope for the Allaroonahan warriors to display individual valour; for the rabble rout having thrown aside every incum-

brance, had not even a club to defend themselves with. The soldiers had been divided into two companies; one of which, commanded by Kennee, guarded the country towards Dahomy; and so well did they watch it, that out of those who escaped the fire on that side, only three lived to carry the news to Abomey. The other company was animated by the presence of Soo-Mah, who defended the side next his own kingdom; and in this quarter there was a little fighting. A small body of Amazons having retained their presence of mind, fled as they saw the beasts doing in an oblique direction. They had kept possession of their weapons and fought with great bravery; holding at bay a much superior number of Allaroonahans. This they continued to do until the arrival of Soo-Mah, when they were driven back fighting with the energy of despair; and so excited were both bodies of combatants, that they seemed to have forgotten the war of the elements in their own deadly strife.

The further progress of the flames was arrested by the swamp that stretched its shallow waters across their course; and from whose dark surface were now reflected the clouds of smoke that rolled above them. Since the commencement of the fire, the violence of the

wind had continued to increase, until it had almost acquired the strength of a hurricane; but no sooner was the one element subdued, than the other gave token of abatement, and a deep calm ensued. The sun too, which had as yet barely accomplished half his course to the meridian, now shone forth in unobscured splendour, as though rejoicing over the cessation of nature's war.

As the clouds of smoke drifted away to the westward, the Allaroonahans were enabled to obtain a full view of the scene of devastation. Long did they gaze in mute astonishment at the complete success of their stratagem; not an enemy was to be seen alive; the whole of the invading army having apparently been swept away by the fiery torrent, except those slain by the spears of the Allaroonahan warriors, whose bodies lay in a continuous line, as do sometimes those of beetles on the sea shore after the receeding of the tide.

Amongst the bodies of those who had escaped the flames, was one which attracted Kennee's attention through the richness of its dress and ornaments; and which he soon recognised as that of Nar-Chez, the late ambassador to his father's court. He was leaning on his spear, contrasting in his mind the then condition of

the once haughty Dahoman, with the stateliness with which he had so short a time previously passed over that very ground, when he perceived that life was not extinct. Thinking the recovery of such a man might be of some service to Allaroonah, and remembering the repute in which the Fellatahs were held for their success in the art of healing, he commanded the body to be placed on the back of a slave and conveyed to their village; desiring that the utmost skill might be exerted to preserve his life.

Meanwhile, the straggling bands of warriors were collecting to one point, but the king was not among them. He had been last seen engaged in the encounter with the Amazons, who, as we have already observed, were endeavouring to force their way through the ranks of their enemies. Kennee, supposing him to have followed some of them into the bush, went in search, accompanied by a few attendants. As the small band of warriors traversed the northern line, they saw scattered around them many slaughtered Dahomans, whose bodies lay half concealed in the long grass: few were the Allaroonahans who were mingled with the foe. They had almost reached the border of the swamp without meeting the king, or in fact any living

creature whatever, and were on the point of returning when they came to the scene of a deadly strife. There were at least fifty lifeless bodies or wounded warriors lying in the compass of an arrow's flight, most of them Allaroonahans; these were on the downtrodden grass; whilst just beyond, on the scorched ground, was many a blackened mass, and many a Dahoman musket and dagger grasped by their foes showed how fierce the strife had been. Some of the invaders had fled to the swamp, followed to this dangerous retreat by their enemies, who in the heat of battle forgot that it would prove treacherous alike to themselves as well as to those who fled from them; and in this spot, stretched across two lifeless Dahomans, lay the body of Soo-Mah. In the ardour of pursuit, he had been lured on; and when entangled in the loose soil, there was no retreat for warrior or Amazon, and thus all had met a mutual fate. Upon making this discovery a messenger was sent to bid the chiefs lead back the army to Allaroonah; for as the king was unwell he would not be able to do so in person. It was past mid-day, for the shadows were lengthening toward the East, ere the first vague rumours concerning the destruction of the invaders reached the defenceless inhabitants of the valley; and

defenceless they were, for not a man or youth who could bear arms had remained at home. Fathers, husbands and brothers all departed, not to defend their own lives only, but the lives of their aged and their infants; to fight for their liberty, and the honour of their wives and maidens.

The flocks and herds of the Fellatahs had been driven from their accustomed pastures to the upper end of the valley, beyond the town; and thus the whole scene around the village was deprived of its usual characteristic appearance; and the stillness of the fields was broken only by the sounds that came from the neighbouring woods, such as the chattering of parrots, and the cries of monkeys, as they frolicked in blissful ignorance of danger. No trace of human presence was visible except one solitary group, who appeared like a company of Peri taking the advantage of the absence of man to visit a spot of Nature's most lovely adorning. They were a few of the Fellatah maidens who had tarried with their mistress, awaiting, under the shade of a tree, the promised messenger's arrival, in order that they might the sooner learn the joyful tidings of victory or prepare to meet the bitter doom that would otherwise await them.

Myha was seated a little way removed from her attendants, silent, but not unemployed; for she was offering up prayers learnt from a mother's lips: whilst she several times took a few loose papers from the upper folds of her dress; and after perusing some portion of their Arabic characters returned them again to their place of security. Her maidens supposed them to be connected in some way or other with the charm she was working in order to secure the safety of her lover. They had often before that day observed the care with which she guarded these leaves, creating in their untutored minds feelings of superstitious reverence for them; and now they considered themselves comparatively safe under the working of such powerful spells. Far different would have been their feelings had they known that these mysterious leaves contained not verses from the sacred koran, but portions of the Bible of the Christians—chapters from the book of the accursed infidel.

How precious were these frail papers to Myha—the best cherished gift of her departed mother: and with these, aided by her elegant eyes, she had endeavoured to win Kennee from the blind worship of the Fetish of his nation; but, as we have seen, her efforts were yet

attended with little apparent success. He listened, it is true, with unfeigned delight to all she said, but more for the pleasure of hearing her sweet voice, than with the desire of gleaning any instruction from her words.

Many were the glances she had fruitlessly cast towards the southern hills; until at length she espied a small band of men overtop their crest. Though a long way off, she could perceive that they were directing their course towards the deserted village; and as they approached nearer, the anxious watcher saw they bore some wounded or lifeless warrior. Myha was in an agony of fear; her father she knew it could not be, for, having sent the young shepherds to the battle, he, with the rest of the old men and children, had gone up the valley to supply their places; nor was it the king; for his misfortune, of whatever nature, would not have been made known so soon or in so public a manner. Might it not be Kennee who was being brought, perhaps to die in her father's hut. These thoughts flew in quick succession through her mind; and starting to her feet, she would have flown to meet the messengers, had not fear deprived her of the power of so doing: she sank to the ground and looked not until they had deposited

their burden at her feet, when a single glance told her gladdened heart that it was not he.

From these men she learnt the safety of Kennee, and the total destruction of the invading army; and they were immediately sent on to recal her father, and bear the joyful news to Allaroonah. Myha having been made acquainted with the rank of the wounded Dahoman, and that it was at the command of their young chief that they had brought him thither, caused him to be placed in her father's hut; and, assisted by her maidens, proceeded at once to exert her skill in attempting to restore him to consciousness.

In the meantime the victorious army was on its march back to Allaroonah. The beating of drums, and the louder and not less discordant sound of trumpets, made from elephants' tusks, carried the tidings of the approach of the warriors far and wide. The whole population left in the town flocked out of its gates, and proceeded down the valley to meet their deliverers, and welcome them home. Easy would it be to imagine the pride, amounting almost to adoration, that filled every breast among the joyous throng when they beheld their youthful chief surrounded by his conquering warriors, and outvieing all in nobleness of mien.

They looked upon him as the defender of their liberty, and all that made life happy; and their souls drank in a renewal of hope at the sight.

The evening was devoted to merriment, and numberless were the sheep and oxen slain. The feasting and dancing continued till long past midnight; and as the full moon shone upon the scene, lighting it with all her tropical splendour, it became one of surpassing interest; and such as could be delineated to the life only by an artist's brush. The spot chosen for the revels was a level sward, a few hundred yards from the walls of the town, and upon which a number of wide-branching trees cast their dark shadows, rendered more sombre through the brilliance of the silver light with which the rest of the picture was illuminated.

Here a group of aged men, seated on the ground, talked over the deeds of their more youthful days, and enlivened their discourse by imbibing deep potations from calabashes of palm wine; there a company of crones were making merry at the expense of the maidens; whilst on all sides troops of naked children flitted about in a state of unbounded enjoyment.

But the point of most attraction was where the warriors and young maidens were exerting their utmost

powers in the dance. Every one possessed of a showy garment had that evening put it on; and they who were not so favoured by fortune, endeavoured to supply the deficiency, and make a display by smearing their almost naked bodies with paint of various colours; but as these were few in number, their presence did not detract from, but rather added to the picturesque effect of the scene. Cotton tobes of the most gaudy and tasteless patterns that ever entered into the minds of a Manchester designer to imprint on his flimsy calicoes, were mingled in close proximity with the more costly and elegant ones of native manufacture, not a few of the latter being composed of silk; brilliant scarlet and blue formed the predominant colours, from which the eye of the spectator was relieved by the contrast afforded by the purely white garments of the Fetish men.

As the throngs moved about from place to place, and the dancers became more animated, they might not inaptly be likened to the painted butterflies that flitted in clouds throughout the livelong day among the flowers of the valley, so varied was the costume of the assembled multitude.

But why was not Soo-Mah amongst his people? or

why did no one ask, "Where is the king?" All knew full well the cause of his absence, but feigned to be ignorant of it. One would remark, "The king has destroyed his enemies the Dahomans, but dared not come home to-night lest their evil Fetish should molest him." Another would reply, "He has remained in the field of battle; he will return to-morrow." Thus did they dissemble to each other, deferring their grief to a less joyous moment. For in these very expressions they showed their knowledge of what had taken place. Orders had been given by the Fetishmen that the body of the king should not be brought to Allaroonah until just before sunrise on the following morning; when the people, oppressed by fatigue or the excesses of the revel, would be retired to their huts, and the scene of mirth have become a solitude befitting the death march of a king.

CHAPTER V.

" The Pagan, by his words and deeds confess'd
The lurking purpose of his impious breast;
Lost was the courtesy which first he showed,
When fair his speech in gentlest accents flowed.
What shall she do? how shape her dangerous course?
What way remains t'elude his brutal force?"

ARIOSTO.

IT has already been narrated that when Nar-Chez paid his first visit to Allaroonah, in the capacity of ambassador from the king of Dahomy, he passed near the Fellatah village; and that whilst doing so obtained a momentary view of the lovely Myha, when she remained at Kennee's side as he approached. From that instant he became inflamed with the most violent passion to be possessed of so charming a prize; and resolved to risk everything, both his own position as a Dahoman chief, and his master's reputation; for it was looked upon as a great disgrace to the king when he allowed himself to be outwitted by a subject.

He had sought and obtained his present command

for the ostensible purpose of chastising the insolent inhabitants of Allaroonah by robbing them of the fairest of their daughters; and that whilst accomplishing this, he might re-establish his own honour, and regain the title of a great warrior; both of which his late unsuccessful mission had so seriously tended to tarnish; but he had ulterior objects in view; and knowing the precarious position in which his late conduct had placed him, and the full revenge sure to be taken by the king at some future day, he resolved not to risk his head again by returning to Abomey. The plan he had formed was to make a sudden eruption into the valley, seize the persons of the Fellatah maidens, whom he intended to bestow on such of his officers as he could best trust, reserving for himself the one great prize; this accomplished, he would then push forward with the army and lay siege to Allaroonah; and whilst the warriors were thus engaged he himself with a small band of followers would fly across the frontier into the kingdom of Ashantee; with whose monarch he had already established communications, and obtained a promise of asylum at his court. Thus, treachery was the guiding star, and self-gratification the aim of his every action until his career was cut

short in a manner he least expected; and instead of the daughter of the Fellatah chief becoming his slave, he was carried to her father's village wounded and a prisoner.

How perfectly unconscious of all this train of deceits was the pure minded and innocent Myha. It was not vanity that had induced her to await the arrival of the Dahomans, but with a curiosity natural to her sex she desired to see some of the female warriors with accounts of whose prowess, and, to the disgrace of the name of woman, extreme ferocity in war, the whole country was kept in a state of continual excitement. No sooner, however, did she discover the person who first approached not to be one of her own sex than she retired.

Kennee having for a few moments graced with his presence the scene of festivity and mirth recounted in the previous chapter, stole away from rejoicings so little in accordance with his feelings, and with a mind full of melancholy forebodings, went to lay his griefs before her to whom almost his every thought was communicated; and who alone possessed the charm of restoring him to cheerfulness. Nor was his grief feigned, though he knew that as soon as the death of his father was publicly announced, he would be called

upon by the unanimous voice of the nation to take upon himself the kingly dignity. He could not reproach himself with having stolen away the hearts of his fellow-countrymen; for when he exhibited, as he sometimes doubtless did, a too haughty spirit in the debates of the chiefs, it was with the sole desire to rouse them —to instill into their minds an enthusiasm foreign to their natures; and his reward had been the spontaneous love of all. He regretted being deprived of his father's counsel at a moment when affairs were at so critical a juncture; for he looked upon a fresh invasion by the Dahomans as an event that, beyond doubt, would sooner or later take place. Added to this was another great disappointment; the morrow had long been the day fixed upon as that which was to have put him in possession of the treasure he valued more than the sovereignty of Allaroonah; and the temporary loss of which would not be compensated by the title of king; for he desired rather to be called "husband" by his Myha than be styled "lord" by ten thousand Allaroonahans.

Absorbed in these reflections he arrived at the Fellatah village, which he found apparently deserted by its inhabitants; and so in truth it was, for all who were able had gone to join the festivities at Allaroonah, leaving

only their faithful watch dogs to guard the flocks. These, however, knew him, and came with signs of joy to lick his hand, or receive a word of recognition. As he approached the hut of the chief his footsteps were inaudible on the fine turf, and he stood in the entrance without his presence being known. The first or outer apartment was unoccupied; but in an inner one a scene was being enacted that in an instant filled Kennee with such violent emotion, that he remained some time transfixed to the spot on which he stood; and then he stole on slow and noiseless as does a tiger, when with quivering lips and straining eyes he advances ready for the fatal spring. He beheld Nar-Chez, seated on a couch, holding Myha's wrist in his grasp, and heard him address to her words such as none before had ever dared to utter.

"If you do not wish me to die," he exclaimed, "oh, let me gaze my fill upon that lovely face; or, if that may not be so, let my soul drink in, if only for a moment, one more smile such as greeted my awakening senses, and made me suppose myself in that blessed region where I was to enjoy you for ever. Oh grant it, for another moment of such happiness were worth a life of captivity."

Myha's averted countenance was marked with alarm and the deepest anguish, whilst tears bedimed her lovely eyes. To struggle she knew would be in vain; and had her terror allowed her to cry out for help, it would have been useless, for none of her own people were at hand, whose presence could have availed her ought. Nar-Chez construed her silence into a half willingness to comply with his suit; and he was becoming more importunate when Myha's down-cast eye fell upon the point of a dagger that he was endeavouring to conceal with his right hand in the folds of his garment. Despairing of human aid, she was lifting up her eyes to heaven with a look of supplication when she beheld the motionless form of Kennee. The same insant his presence was revealed to Nar-Chez as well, and with a shriek of joy the maiden sprang from his relaxed grasp, and flew into the arms of her lover, whose spear the next instant was at the breast of Nar-Chez; and had not Myha averted its course, that moment had been his last, so strong was his revenge, and so unerring his aim.

"Oh do not slay him," she exclaimed;" for though he is our enemy, has he not become my father's guest." Kennee removed her from his bosom, and holding her at

arm's-length, gazed upon her with a look so penetrating, that had it been possible he would have read on her countenance the confirmation of his inmost thoughts. A dreadful suspicion had crossed his mind when he heard her plead for the life of the Dahoman, but it was fleeting as the lightning's flash; for he read only love and innocence in her face. Pure as had been Myha's every thought and act, the knowledge of what was passing in her lover's mind came upon her like the stroke of death; and when his features resumed their wonted expression, and he pressed her again to his heart, the reflow of joy was too sudden to be endured, and Kennee bore her unconscious from the apartment.

Having summoned the few attendants who had accompanied him, he commanded them to convey the prisoner to Allaroonah, and place over him a guard whose lives should answer for his safety. This done, he returned to Myha, who was just recovering consciousness, but still unable to collect her bewildered thoughts, whilst the tears flowed from her closed eyelids as though sorrow had never before opened their fountains. She neither moved nor spoke, until Kennee, as he hung over her, pressed her hand in his, when looking up their eyes met.

"Oh Kennee," she whispered after a little while, for he seemed unwilling to break their silent gaze, "was it not a dreadful moment? But I thank my God it is passed."

"Passed for ever," he exclaimed, "and no such shall again recur. But tell me all: for as I have given you the life of this Dahoman, I shall not lift my arm against him more unless it be in your defence or my own."

"This generous conduct will meet with its reward," replied Myha; "for though he has deserved death at your hand, and escaped the punishment of his crimes, yet will not our God—Oh Kennee, may I not say our God—will He not requite him as he thinks fit?"

"Do not urge the subject of religion now, my Myha; for if I were so inclined, I dared not at this time abandon that of my fathers. But tell me of this dog."

"I received him with pity," replied she, "because they said you had sent him, and that he was a warrior of great note among the Dahomans. Having summoned my maidens, we exerted our utmost skill in the treatment of such cases, and in a short time discerned signs of life. This pleased me the more as some of my attendants had affirmed that our patient could not be

restored to consciousness; and it was a smile of joy at the success of our efforts that greeted him when he first opened his eyes, but which, from his subsequent conduct, he seems to have attributed to other motives. We imagined his stupor must have proceeded from the effects of the fire, his garments being injured by it, and his only wound was one on the head from the blow of a club, and that was not dangerous. I allowed all my attendants, except an old woman whom I kept constantly by my side, to join in the festivities at Allaroonah; for as the wounded Dahoman appeared to be in a very exhausted state, I felt no apprehension of danger in so doing. He had not spoken a word, or seemed to take notice of anything until a short time before your arrival, when he desired a little cool water from the spring. I unreflectingly sent my only attendant for it, and he, throwing off his assumed lethargy, seized the opportunity to —— but why that terrible look, Kennee? Did I not act right in saving him?"

"Yes, my Myha; and now that the heat of the moment is passed, I, like you, will endeavour to forgive, but I cannot forget. Many years ago I found whilst rambling in a ravine among the mountains, a young panther that had inadvertently strayed from its mother's

lair, and wandered up the crags from which it could not descend. Tamed by hunger, it allowed me to clamber up and carry it away in my arms. I fed it on the choicest food, and it became my companion. One day, however, its savage nature returned; for either through envy, or impelled by instinct, it pounced upon a favourite gazelle that was eating grass from my hand. In the anger of the moment I raised my spear against the panther, and as there was then no compassionate arm near to avert the blow, the weapon passed through his heart, and entered the ground. The poor gazelle, as she licked my hand gazed into my face with her large lustrous eyes, and did all but speak her thanks to me for saving her."

"But you have done more for me than you did for the poor gazelle," replied Myha, "her life was all she had, and that you saved; but you preserved to me more than life itself; and that too without leaving me the anguish of being the cause of the death of this Dahoman."

"But how shall we dispose of so treacherous a prisoner?" asked Kennee.

"He might be sent to Ashantee," said Myha; "and if the king your father would —— but why that look of sorrow? Has ought befallen the king?"

"My father," replied he, "is with the spirits of his ancestors, and will doubtless entreat the Fetish to assist us in the war which must inevitably follow our deeds of this morning."

Myha had received no intimation of the morning's catastrophe; but now, upon hearing from Kennee how his father had fallen, fighting against the invaders of his country, she endeavoured to convey comfort to the mind of the youthful chief. This she did, not by describing the kingly honours that awaited him, but by pointing out the glorious death of his father, and cheering his heart with remembrances of the past; with the deference he had always paid to the king's wishes, and also to the admiration which his courage had extorted from both friend and foe, kindling a love of martial deeds amongst his fellow countrymen, until their slothful natures put on an unwonted activity. These were pleasing pictures, and the more charming through being drawn by so skilful an artist.

"My Myha has omitted one thing, that of itself would make the future, dark as it appears, worth the living for, and the possession of it brighten the dreariest moments. A love such as hers is beyond the power of man to take away."

A blush mantled her tawny cheek at Kennee's words "Poor as it is," said she, as he stooped to kiss her forehead, "it is all your own."

This brought them to discourse of their union, which the invasion of the Dahomans had prevented, and which the death of Soo-Mah would again postpone; they agreed therefore, that it should not take place before the termination of the war; about the issue of which Myha's youthful heart entertained no fears.

Kennee returned to Allaroonah much happier than when he left it, though the interim had witnessed the bitterest moments he ever passed. Upon arriving at the town he ordered Nar-Chez to be brought before him. The fawning, crafty Dahoman was about to lick the dust at his conqueror's feet when Kennee prevented him, bidding him stand upright as became a man, and not crouch like a dog. "For," said he, "though thy heart may be that of a coward, thou hast the mien of a warrior." He then informed him that he had granted him life at the request of her whose ruin he so recently endeavoured to accomplish; and that as he was about to despatch an embassy to the king of Ashantee, he had resolved to send him along with it. Accordingly early on the following morning Nar-Chez departed from

38296

Allaroonah in great joy, and with many professions of gratitude on his lips, but hatred and the hope of revenge engrossing his every thought.

A council was called of the chief men, both of the Allaroonahans and also of the Fellatahs; and in order that their deliberations might be as public as possible, the palaver was held outside the walls of the town, underneath a Fetish tree. The spot was one held in great veneration by the superstitious Allaroonahans on account of the many wonderful properties attributed to it by the priests. Here each evening the old men were accustomed to meet and talk over the news of the town, or during the mid-day heat to lounge away the time in luxurious indolence. But now the countenances of the assembled multitude that thronged its sacred shade bore an earnestness of expression seldom displayed by the natives of Western Africa.

At the opening of the palaver the Fetish men announced that the king's health was not yet restored; upon which several chiefs in succession recounted the heroic deeds of Soo-Mah, and expatiated on the numberless benefits he had conferred on his subjects. These requiems were delivered in the form of extemporary poems, or rather recitations, and embraced all

the principal events of the king's reign, most of them being mere exaggerated statements of events trivial in themselves; but as the speakers, as well as many others present, had been engaged in them, they were to some extent extolling their own exploits under the guise of an eulogy on those of the king, and accordingly were listened to with great patience.

When the day was considerably advanced, a messenger burst through the crowd, perspiring and covered with dust, and in accents of well-feigned grief announced the king to be much worse than he was the previous evening. In a few moments a second, bearing still greater marks of haste, came to inform the chiefs that the king had determined to visit his fathers in the land of spirits, and that he had chosen his son Kennee-Voo, the young lion, to be his successor. Hereupon followed a long discussion as to whether the king had done right in leaving his people whilst at war. This question however was set at rest by the priests, who said that being too good for earth the Fetish had desired to have him.

It was now formally announced that the king was dead; but no mention was made of his having been slain in the late battle. The chiefs then adjourned to

the palace, and the body of Soo-Mah, arrayed in a gorgeous manner, was buried beneath the floor of one of the rooms amid the bursts of discordant music, and the frantic gestures of the throng. Each chief threw into the grave something as a present for the king to take with him, whilst the priests propitiated the evil Fetish by powerful charms placed in the hands and on the breast of the departed monarch, whose spirit they supposed would not finally leave the body until the grave was filled up. At the termination of the ceremony, a general lamentation of seven days' continuance was proclaimed, during which all manner of work was to be suspended. Loo-Ma, the favourite wife of the deceased, was ordered by the priests to prepare to follow her lord; and to enable her to do this in a proper frame of mind, thirty days were allotted her for the purpose of making known amongst the people the amiable qualities of him whose joy, as well as her own, she was about to heighten by joining him in the land of spirits.

After the period of mourning for his father was concluded, Kennee assumed the royal authority by the unanimous consent of the nation, and was saluted king amid great rejoicings. His first act was to summon the

chiefs to a palaver on the threatening appearance their relations with Dahomy had assumed, and the necessity of immediately preparing to resist the attack of its warriors. After some preliminary remarks he proceeded to say: "That if any of the chiefs were willing to become the slaves of a foreign tyrant, and sell to him, for a temporary peace, the daughters of Allaroonah, he would absolve them from their allegiance, and allow them to depart. But that as for himself, and such of the warriors who had not permitted a cowardly fear to obliterate from their minds the heroic actions of their fathers, nor become insensible to the charms of liberty, they would not part with what every true warrior held more dear than life itself, the honour of their country and of its maidens, except at such a price that the remembrance of the conquest of Allaroonah should descend through generations of Dahomans yet unborn, and be styled the war of death."

Kennee's oration was received with loud shouts of approval; and all the chiefs took the king's oath to die, if required, in defence of their country. Having assured himself of their loyalty, he proposed, as it was necessary they should be acquainted with the movements of the enemy, that some one among themselves,

whose testimony could be relied upon, should go to Abomey to obtain the required information. Now however, all were silent. The danger to be encountered in such an expedition, was imminent, for discovery would have been instant death; or, what was more to be dreaded, prolonged torture.

He cast his eyes with an enquiring glance over the assembled chiefs, but there was not one who was courageous enough to dare the deed. "Do not think, my friends," said he, after a few moments' pause, "that I am displeased at your hesitation to undertake so perilous a duty; I am rather rejoiced at it, as it gives me an opportunity of proving to you that I am willing to risk my life in the cause of my country—I will go!"

At these words the whole assembly rose, every one being ashamed of the pusillanimity he had shown. The young warrior perceived that each chief was about to volunteer his services, and therefore motioning them to remain silent, he stated that no argument they could use should divert him from his purpose; but to show that he did not wish to take all the glory to himself, he would have as his companion one of their number, who should be chosen by lot; a proposition highly pleasing to all, as it exculpated them from the charge

of cowardice. The lot fell on a young warrior named Allah-Hoo, the courteous. The choice was just the one Kennee would have wished to make, for Allah had been his companion from boyhood, and the attachment between the young men was strong and mutual.

The time fixed for their departure was the evening of the same day, and twenty days the period of their absence, during which the affairs of state were to be in the hands of the chiefs, who were to summon every warrior in the kingdom to the defence of Allaroonah, where they were to meet before the day fixed upon for Kennee's return. The reason to be given to the people for the king not appearing in public was to be illness.

As the sun was yet some distance above the western mountains when the palaver concluded, Kennee resolved to spend what remained of daylight with Myhà. Repairing at once to the Fellatah village, he found her superintending the winnowing and grinding of corn for the evening's repast; and leading her on one side they seated themselves at a little distance from the rustic group.

Myha perceived that some melancholy thought oppressed her lover's mind, but naturally supposed

that he grieved for the death of the king. She therefore endeavoured by her own cheerfulness to divert his attention from the subject; relating each trifling incident that had occurred to her since last she saw him. He smiled as he looked in her bright sunny countenance; but when her words ceased, a sigh, not to be repressed, told he would not be comforted. She cast her eyes on the ground, fearing, lest her innocent prattle had offended.

"Myha," said he, taking her hand in his, "though you are very precious to me, and life itself without your love would be but a blank, still you have a rival; and one that shares that love with you."

She raised her eyes to his to see if he really meant what these words expressed, for his tone was not that of one who jests.

"Do not be jealous," continued he, "for she is equally dear to both of us. It is of our native valley that I speak; and my duty as king now calls upon me to devote all my energy to save her from the ruthless hand of those who would deprive her of all her charms; or, if need be, to lose my life in the attempt. We are about to part—perhaps for ever."

"Oh Kennee," said she with emotion, "could not

peace be restored; and those cruel Dahomans prevented from again coming?"

"You little know, my Myha, the treachery and blood-thirstiness of the foes we have to contend with. Oaths and treaties are mere forms and idle words to them; they will have our persons or our lives; and better far will it be to die free and with honour than, as slaves, perish miserably like cowards. The only alternative offered me is, either to give my subjects and my bride to the king of Dahomy, or to defend them against the whole power of that monarch; and did every heart in Allaroonah beat with an impulse strong as mine, their Amazons would be driven from the hills at the foot of our lovely valley as easily as is the chaff from your maiden's winnowing stone by this gentle breeze. But those tears, Myha, ill become her who is to be a warrior's bride; who will, ere long, have to cheer her lover on to deeds of daring, and, may I say, to victory also."

"When the hour you speak of, Kennee, arrives, you will find me not unworthy of it," replied she; "but I had fondly hoped that our lives would be spent in peace, our only care how best to please each other. How soon then are these visions dispelled; these

morning dreams of happiness from which we awake only to a mid-day of war and bloodshed."

"After which our sun may yet go down without a cloud, Myha; and then how sweet will be the calm."

"Do not think, Kennee," said she, "that I repine at our lot. I am ready to sacrifice everything I may for you and my country. I can minister to the wants of the wounded warriors, who will help you to defend us from slavery. I have already seen blood, and shall therefore not shrink from the sight of it."

"And where has my Myha witnessed the horrors of war?—a foreign foe has not been slain in the valley of Allaroonah since she became its choicest treasure."

"No," replied she; "but almost from infancy I have had the lambs torn by beasts of prey brought in, and as they lick my hand they seem wishful to express their gratitude for my kindness: they cannot speak, but your warriors will."

Kennee smiled at Myha's innocence; but the next moment he trembled at the thought of the horrors of a Dahoman invasion. They prolonged their discourse until the declining sun had cast the shadows of the western mountains across the lovely valley, warning Kennee to depart. He took a fond farewell of Myha,

whose image was to be ever present to him during the dangers of the approaching expedition; and often did he muse upon her parting words; for she had said, "may my God protect you, and bring you back in safety; and if He do, O Kennee, may I not say He is our God?"

CHAPTER VI.

"And when the youth
Revealed his fears, he saw her tawny cheek
Whiten, and round his neck she clung and wept:
She told him something dreadful was at hand,
She knew not what." SOUTHEY.

A REPORT of the repulse sustained by the Dahomans, and their vast preparations for a renewed attack upon Allaroonah, spread with surprising rapidity far and wide, reaching even the Ashantee court at Coomassie, and filling it with alarm, for the king was then engaged suppressing a revolt in a distant province of his dominions. Supposing that it would be their monarch's wish to cement more fully the peace already existing between Ashantee and Dahomy, the chiefs who remained in the capital at once despatched an ambassador, with a numerous retinue and valuable presents to Abomey.

Kennee and his companion fortunately fell in with these Ashantees, when a few days' journey from the

Dahoman capital: and they, thinking the two men were peasants of the country, as they seemed to be, took them into their service as baggage carriers, and thus the young warriors entered Abomey without exciting suspicion. The first sight that greeted them upon approaching the walls was of a truly national character; five human skulls were placed on spears at the entrance of the gateway, and a crier proclaimed to all that they once belonged to five persons who were supposed to be warriors, but proved only women, for they had fled before the children of Allaroonah, "who," said he, "are only as flies among swallows when compared with the true warriors of Dahomy."

Being regarded as forming part of the retinue of the Ashantee ambassador, the two Allaroonahans were enabled to learn all that was going forward, and viewed with astonishment the great resources for war possessed by their enemies. Though Allaroonah was generally talked of as the country about to be attacked, yet no one except the king knew for certainty that it was so. Twenty thousand warriors, well drilled, and most of them armed with muskets, were reviewed every morning by the monarch. These troops consisted of fifteen thousand males, and five thousand

Amazons, who vowed to emulate each other in deeds of cruelty in the forthcoming war; whilst heralds, stationed at the gates of the town, announced to the passers by that those who returned from the next war without bringing the head of an enemy, or the price of a captive, to prove they had done their duty, should be degraded from the rank of warriors, and become women and slaves, and their families sold to the white men.

But not all this array of pomp and power could have made Kennee's pulse throb quicker, had he not remembered the cruelty of the Dahomans as a nation, and heard words of direful import among the multitude, whose universal theme was the beauty said to be possessed by the Fellatah maiden, who was affianced to the young chief of Allaroonah, renowned for his prowess in the chase and in war. For though nobleness of sentiment towards their enemies was not one of the virtues of the Dahomans, who affected to hold in utter contempt all the surrounding nations, still in the case of the youthful Allaroonahan, his valour was so well known that to attempt to hide it would have proved of no avail. But in order to take some of the credit to themselves of his being admitted a warrior, they said he did not learn

from his father's slaves how to fight, but that having once gone out with the Dahoman army, he only imitated their warriors.

Having acquired all the information it was possible to obtain, Kennee hastened to set out upon his return to Allaroonah; and for this purpose he and his companion left the town secretly about dusk, and arrived safely in the open country. Here they felt themselves free from danger, for there were few trees to obstruct the view, but only a little brushwood that grew here and there in tufts: they had not travelled far, however, when a man well armed sprang from one of these bushes, where he had lain concealed, and seized Kennee by the throat; but he would soon have freed himself from the grasp had he not been anticipated by Allah, who drew a concealed weapon from his girdle, and ran the assailant through the body before he could use his own arms. They dragged him on one side into the bush, and after arming themselves with his weapons, proceeded on their journey at a rapid speed, without any suspicion that their disguise had been penetrated.

The man who had attacked them was a soldier of the Dahoman army, and was marauding a little on his own account, when, seeing the two strangers appa-

rently unarmed, he thought to make slaves of them, little expecting the resistance he met with. In the short struggle he recognised in one of the men he wished to capture the young chief of Allaroonah, with whom he had served when Kennee commanded the auxiliary troops sent by his father two years before to Abomey. Though the wound he had received was of a severe nature, he so far recovered as to be able to drag himself by slow degrees to one of the gates of the town. The sentinel, however, would have nothing to say to him but ordered him off. When this man had removed his watch-stones and been relieved, the wounded soldier made another attempt to approach the gate, and this time with better success; for, at the mention of the name of the young chief of Allaroonah, he at once attracted the attention of the fresh sentinel, who conveyed him to the hut of the prime minister. The Mayo, upon hearing the word of the dying soldier, believed his story, and ordered a hundred of the swiftest messengers to scour the country as far as the frontiers of Allaroonah.

Early the next morning, the trace of the fugitives was discovered; and such was the ardour of the pursuit, that on the fifth day a band of three of the mes-

sengers came up with them. Fearing to encounter the young warriors, who they perceived to be armed, during the daylight, they waited till night, hoping to take them whilst sleeping. But Kennee, like a true soldier, was always prepared; he and Allah taking watch by turns; and so they had done that night. Reclining by his sleeping companion, he was alive to every sound that broke the stillness of the desert solitude. At one time a hungry panther would come and sniff the air; at another a wolf; but these speedily made off upon perceiving that their dreaded enemies were aware of their proximity. At length, a lion, attracted to the spot by the cries of a jackal, showed his fiery eye-balls in the faint light of a young moon; and now the expert hunter feigned death, well knowing that the noble beast disdained to assuage his hunger, except when sore pressed, by prey he had not hunted. His shaggy mane brushed the face of the young warrior; and had he then made the slightest movement Allaroonah would have been deprived of its defender and its hope; but after a minute survey he left him and went to examine the other body. Kennee could scarce restrain himself from drawing off the lion's attention from his companion, for should Allah awake

it would be to certain death; but he was relieved from so dangerous an alternative, for at that moment there was a rustling among the dry grass—game was near—the lion pricked his ears; and, uttering a low growl, lifted his eyes from the body before him, and the next instant bounded off with a roar that spread terror far and wide over the wilderness.

Scarcely was his huge form hidden from view, ere a shriek of some unfortunate being pierced the air, and was quickly followed by others. Kennee grasped his spear and crept stealthily through the grass; nor had he gone far before he came upon his acquaintance, the lion, with two men under his paws; whilst a third stood almost within his reach, too paralized with fear to attempt to escape by flight from the death that seemed inevitable.

It was not the first time that Kennee had faced a lion; and now that the life of a fellow-creature was in jeopardy, he hesitated not a moment, but showed himself to the enraged brute; who, seeing how he was defied, sprang at once on his presumptuous foe; but his strength was not proof against the hunter's stratagem; for Kennee, just as the lion made his spring, lowered his spear, the but end of which rested on the ground, to such an angle that the point entered his

breast, and the king of beasts fell dead at the young warrior's feet. The men were the three Dahoman messengers, who had been waiting an opportunity to capture the two young warriors, when they met with a foe, whose presence they had not calculated upon. One of the men was dead, killed by a stroke of the lion's paw, and the other very badly torn; whilst the third, who supposed he had escaped death in one shape only to meet it in another, offered no resistance, but allowed Kennee to unarm him. Allah was not a little surprised when he found his companion guarding the two prisoners, with the carcasses of the lion and the Dahoman lying near.

Before giving the messengers a promise of life, their preserver compelled them to swear by the head of their king, an oath that a Dahoman holds sacred, to reveal at Abomey before an assembly of the chiefs how they had been saved; and to tell their master that "both the old lion of the desert, and the young lion of Allaroonah were his enemies; and that he would find it as difficult to snare the one as to overcome the other." The companions then proceeded on their way, and entered the valley in safety; but not until they had exceeded by two days the period specified for their

return: causing no small excitement among the Allaroonahans, of whose proceedings in the meanwhile it will be necessary to take a short glance.

For some time the populace believed the statement of the Fetish men and chiefs as to the illness of their young warrior king; when day after day, however, passed and he came not amongst them, they began to suspect treachery, but were appeased for a time by the priests, who affirmed that they had learnt from the Fetish the very day upon which the king would recover—naming the one fixed for his return from Abomey; and when at length the happy morn arrived, all was joy and merriment; but as the day wore on and he appeared not their fears were again awakened, and as the sun went down expectation was turned into dismay. On the following morning they assembled in vast numbers round the Fetish houses, loudly demanding their king, and saying that the chiefs had sold them into the hands of their enemies. Upon this, the priests, fearing an insurrection of the people, announced the real cause of the king's absence; and though all admired the act, yet every mind was filled with the most dismal forebodings, and nothing was to be heard but cries of lamentation.

The next morning the chiefs called a grand palaver, and a stormy debate commenced that had lasted far into the day, when the assembled thousands were startled by the appearance among them of what at first they supposed to be an apparition. But when they saw the flash of the king's blue eyes, they knew that it was the young lion himself. Close behind him came Allah, carrying in his hands the muskets and other weapons of the three Dahomans, whilst over his shoulders was flung the skin of a full-grown lion. It were needless to tell of the joy of the chiefs, or the frantic gestures of the people, or to relate how Kennee first alarmed them by narrating what he had seen at Abomey, and then changing his theme, fired every heart with a patriotic enthusiasm.

The idleness of all, both of freemen and slaves, was now changed into activity and preparation for war. Every man capable of service had already been summoned to repair to Allaroonah, and large bands of armed men were constantly arriving from the country. In the town itself the scene was one of novelty, the entire population being engaged in some occupation or other. Numbers were manufacturing spears and clubs, others bringing in provisions; whilst the rest repaired

the walls, which had been allowed in many parts to fall into decay, and erected stockades across the gaps caused by the river's bed. Amongst the most active was the young king, who encouraged them by his example and cheerfulness. And thus by the energy of one man was this indolent, ease-loving people transformed into a state of busy existence, more resembling that displayed by a colony of disturbed ants than a nation of negroes.

But leaving the busy Allaroonahans to their measures for defence, let us cast a glance at the still peaceful Fellatah village and its interesting inhabitants. The old chief had mourned for his friend Soo-Mah the late king, with a grief silent but sincere. It was a melancholy reflection to him to be thus suddenly separated, after so long and firm an attachment, without a parting farewell, or the hope of ever again meeting; for the land of spirits to which Soo-Mah was gone was not the paradise promised to true Mussulmans by their prophet. The thoughts most pleasing to him were that the son of his friend, for whom he had ever felt a parent's affection, might, through his daughter's influence, become ere long a convert to the Faith: and that she, by her virtues and devotions, would at last win the favour

of the prophet, and so be chosen as one of the few women who are to be admitted to share with man the blissful future.

Happy was it for him that he lived in ignorance of the truth; for had he been told that she, his only child, was a worshipper of Christ, a member of that religion than which no other is more abhorrent to a sincere Mahomedan, the knowledge of it would have "brought down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." Long and well had the old man studied the temperament of Kennee, marking its development as he merged from youth to manhood; and was not a little pleased to see such promise exhibited by him in whom the happiness of his daughter was bound up. Thus their love for each other was the greatest joy of his old age. Nor did his heart misgive him even when the object of his love was in the stronghold of his enemy; for though the young king must be exposed to great danger, yet he knew that the love he entertained for Myha would place a restraint on his courage, and make him listen in silence to an enemy's words, which, had he not been so influenced, might have proved too great a provocation for him to resist.

Myha, however, took a different view of the matter,

and therefore the state of mind in which she passed the time that intervened between Kennee's departure and that fixed for his return may be easily imagined. It was the first time she had endured so prolonged and intense an anxiety, for during their former separation, her more youthful mind had felt the pain of his absence rather than a dread of the dangers to which he might be exposed. At one time she tormented herself by reflecting on the treachery of the Dahomans, and the horror with which he would witness their cruelties, and the fate that awaited him should his noble nature lead him into danger, and so discovery. Then again she would endeavour to pacify herself with the remembrance of his prudence, and the consciousness of the high stake for which he had ventured his life. The last of the oft-numbered days at length arrived; noon came, and the sun went down, but Kennee was not there. She retained her composure, however, throughout the day, and even remained in a state of hopeful expectation till the close of the following one, when, for a short time, her fears bore down every source of comfort until she sought it where alone it could be found.

Her father had gone each morning early to Alla-

roonah, in order to be the first to bring the joyful tidings to his daughter of the return of the loved one. Twice had he gone in hope, and as often returned in despondency; and now set out a third time. Messengers were constantly passing to and fro between the town and the Fellatah village; and through these she learnt the stormy debate of the chiefs and the discontent of the people. Her usual occupations, which had hitherto served in some degree to divert her gloomy thoughts, were this day quite neglected; and she gave way to a melancholy that refused to be dispelled.

The better to indulge her thoughts she had retired from her father's hut to the very spot where she had parted from her lover. The stillness, unbroken by any sound except the lowing of the herd or the plaintive bleating of the unpenned flocks, was so deep that its very intensity created a fancied sound: this quiet was at last disturbed by a noise of many voices, the hum of the distant town. The insurrection, she imagined, had begun, and her father's life might pay the penalty of his love for her. But the next moment a shout that rent the air rose from Allaroonah, and was carried in distinct vibrations from crag to crag, as

though the mountain peaks were telling each other the joyful tidings of the return of him who had so often scaled their rocky heights. Nor was she slow to divine the cause, but knew it to be the voice of thousands whose minds were at that moment released from anxious suspense: it was a shout of triumph, not a cry of defiance or despair.

She sat as one in a pleasing trance, drinking in the grateful sound, nor moved nor spoke: her imagination, however, was at work; she thought of her own parting words, and the silent assent her lover had given them.—"And now he will say 'our God,' and I shall be more than repaid for all the misery I have suffered." Little did she know of the human heart, and that little took its colouring from the workings and conceptions of her own innocent mind. After indulging for some time in her delightful reverie she hastened to the village, and though already assured of Kennee's arrival at Allaroonah, yet her heart was not at ease, for his company could alone banish the wretchedness she had so long felt.

Kennee left the noisy town as soon as his presence there was no longer required, and sought the quiet of the Fellatah village, and the converse of her whose

sweet smile he had so often seen in his dreams. He was accompanied by the old chief, who, having been present at the morning's palaver, had witnessed the pusillanimity of the people when deprived of their bold leader, and had heard that leader relate the vastness of the preparations for war then making at Abomey; and doubted not but that a pent-up torrent was about to burst over and deluge the lovely valley of Allaroonah.

Thus he might be forgiven if he allowed not the cheerfulness of his beloved child to banish from his mind the melancholy with which it was tenanted: rendering more bitter the thought that this might be the last unclouded evening that she, though so young and full of hope, could spend; for on the morrow their pastoral home was to be broken up, and himself and such of the tribe as chose to abide with him and share in the fortunes of Allaroonah, were to remove there; and whither their flocks and herds were to be driven upon the approach of the Dahoman army.

The movement was sudden, but not more so than the danger required: war with all its horrors was at hand, and its first infliction fell upon the innocent. The old chief was to leave, perhaps for ever, a spot

endeared by so many years of happiness; and begin afresh in old age the turmoils of his youth. The valley had truly been to him "a land flowing with milk and honey," blessings that were the sweeter through the firm friendship of her king towards him: and here too the crowning point of his happiness had been attained in the gift of a child to watch over his declining years. And as a tear bedewed his cheek, when he looked around at the scene where all was yet peace and rural mirth, Myha threw her arms round his neck and wept also; for she supposed his grief was from the excess of his joy: and so she smiled and wept by turns.

By degrees, however, she learnt the startling truth, and a momentary fear for the future filled her mind; but the noble bearing of Kennee soon removed her dread, and she endeavoured to impart to her aged parent a ray of that hope with which her own heart overflowed. But hope does not find the man whose locks are white with age or cares so ready to receive its flattery as the youthful maiden.

When Kennee perceived that the sorrow of the old chief was not to be assuaged he offered with a noble generosity to send a guard to conduct him and his

company through the passes of the northern mountains to the country beyond, where they might remain until the issue of the war was known.

"Had our peace continued undisturbed," replied the old man, "I could not have expected, in the course of nature, to live many more years; and by remaining here I shall at least have the melancholy satisfaction of leaving my bones near those of my friend, your father. I will not undertake the journey unless for my daughter's sake."

"At your command, my father," replied Myha, looking up, for she had seated herself at his feet, "I will depart from my native valley, not else; for only that or death shall remove me from the protection of him who has risked his life for his subjects, and so for me. And though I doubt not but that something dreadful is at hand, yet am I ready to share with him every trouble."

On the following morning Kennee taking with him a number of warriors proceeded to the Fellatah village, and with a great display of barbaric pomp conducted his future bride to Allaroonah, where a suitable abode had been provided for the reception of the old chief, Myha, and a few of her female attendants, on the summit of the sacred rock. The reason Kennee assigned

for his choice of this spot was that they might be freer from the turmoils of war, and in less danger than they would have been in the town; but he had a further motive which he did not disclose, namely, his belief in the superstitions with which the Fetish men had surrounded it; for he still reposed faith in the religion of his ancestors.

Whilst attending to these domestic matters, for they may almost be considered such to him, Kennee never lost sight of the duties that devolved upon him as chief of the nation. The warriors had responded to the summons of their young king with alacrity; for his recent display of courage, and the ability he had shown in planning and carrying through a deep laid stratagem, than which nothing is more pleasing to an African, had raised him higher than before in their estimation, and placed his name far above that of their greatest warrior or most illustrious king. Still Kennee's heart misgave him, when he thought of the large army of the enemy with which his own small force would have to contend: for after collecting all his warriors they only numbered about four thousand; and with this comparatively little band he would have to encounter the army of the Dahoman kingdom.

Nor did the disparity cease with mere numbers; for had that been the only superiority of the enemy, he would have felt no doubts as to the ultimate issue of the war; but each soldier and Amazon who were admitted to rank as warriors, were more efficiently armed, and better drilled than his own; and though these were defending their liberty and homes, those, rendered savage by the recent defeat and slaughter of their companions in arms, were burning to expiate the shame by being revenged upon their slayers.

The spirits of the people were damped for a time by the ill success of the messengers who had been sent to Coomassie, and returned laden with smooth words and generous promises, but without either warriors or supplies. This, however, was no more than Kennee expected; for he had learnt whilst at Abomey that the object of the embassy to that court was to confirm the peace already existing between the monarchs of Dahomy and Ashantee; the latter of whom reflected not that the elephant may be safe so long as he is surrounded by his native forests; but that every tree felled on their borders brings the huntsman a step nearer his prey. The one was too blinded to see that the present was a favourable opportunity to unite with

Allaroonah in checking his powerful neighbour; the other was too crafty not to use such imbecility in furtherance of his own designs.

Some days after Kennee's return, a messenger arrived from the frontiers, sent by a company of Dahomans, who waited there for a safe conduct to Allaroonah. It being suspected that they were spies only, this was not granted; but two chiefs were deputed to confer with them. They were the bearers of a message from the king of Dahomy to his brother of Allaroonah, the tenor of which was most peaceful; it denied that the men destroyed by his warriors, a short time previously, were Dahoman subjects, but only runaway slaves from the white men; and that Dahomy had not then, or ever had any intention of violating the treaty that subsisted between the two kingdoms. It concluded with well-studied expressions of condolence to Kennee for the death of the late king his father; and an address of congratulation upon his own peaceable accession to the throne, and a hope that all enmity between them was at an end. However inclined some of the chiefs might be to listen to this language, Kennee himself did not hesitate an instant in his reply, but sent this word to the messengers—"Say to him

whose slaves you are, 'Barely has a single moon passed since the young lion of Allaroonah couched in the streets of Abomey, and heard the wolf howling in his natural voice. If the Dahomans desire peace let them send hostages and we will believe them—slaves respect not treaties."

The more timorous, and those who were not able to read the course of events, thought this too bold an answer; but a few days sufficed to prove the better judgment and more perfect knowledge of their young king, who was made acquainted with his enemy's movements by a runaway slave from the army, and was well aware that no sacrifices he could then make would stay the march of the enraged Dahomans, who were already advancing towards the valley.

CHAPTER VII.

"So march'd the Thracian Amazons of old,
When Thermodon with bloody billows roll'd;
Such troops as these in shining arms were seen,
When Theseus met in fight their maiden queen.
They clash with manly force their moony shields;
With female shouts resound the Phrygian fields."

DRYDEN'S VIRGIL.

GREAT was the wrath of the tyrant when he learnt that the young king of Allaroonah was his master in stratagem; that he had been in his very presence; and, after spying out all the secrets of the council, had escaped scathless from his power. Another such mistake, and he could only clear himself in the eyes of his subjects by voluntarily visiting the land of Spirits. The first victims to his cruelty were the unfortunate men saved by his courageous foe from the paw of the lion; their heads were exposed on the walls of Abomey, and a crier proclaimed that such would be the fate of all who spoke anything well of the king of Allaroonah. They had fulfilled their oath, though they knew the death that awaited them.

The army intended for the forthcoming war numbered, as before stated, fifteen thousand male warriors, and five thousand Amazons. About one half of these troops were armed with muskets; and the whole regularly drilled and officered after the manner of civilized nations. Every warrior, besides a dagger, had a knife, half as long as a man's arm, for hand to hand encounters, and to be used in clearing a path through the reeds and bushes. Those who had no firearms carried bows and arrows instead, and had also short clubs, that from the great dexterity with which they were used became most formidable weapons in their hands for close combat.

The army was divided into regiments, each of which had its banner, or some Fetish borne aloft on staves; and was always accompanied by a number of musicians whose instruments were decorated with skulls, and hung round with Fetish bones—the latter of which rendered them sacred, and for the loss of one of these drums or trumpets, even if it were in battle, the punishment was death to the musicians and disgrace to the regiment. There was no distinction made between the sexes in point of precedence, and therefore each was required to be equally brave: and though the

men were allowed to possess greater physical strength, it was generally admitted that the Amazons surpassed them in the celerity of their movements and impetuosity in attacking an enemy. The latter quality, however, was sometimes carried to rashness, and often defeated the stratagems of their generals. A constant rivalry existed between the sexes as to which displayed the greatest degree of personal courage in their various wars. These disputes, when carried on in the camp, where the decision was effected by words, generally terminated in favour of the Amazons, who had a decided advantage over their competitors in the national failing of converting every trivial action into a deed of heroism.

Attached to the army was a body of slaves who carried the baggage and provisions. These were armed only with clubs, and never called into action except in cases of great emergency, but as they added to the numbers of the invading army they might have some effect on the minds of the more timorous among the enemy: and may thus be said to have increased its real strength.

Every arrangement being completed, the army moved from beneath the walls of Allaroonah amidst the firing

of muskets and beating of drums; which were answered by the shouts of the inhabitants, who had assembled in thousands to see the warriors depart. Each day's march was conducted with great order and rapidity, and continued until the royal pavilion, which was borne before the army, was pitched, and the standard hoisted, when the camp was formed for the night by each regiment filing past the king, and taking up such a position that the whole formed an immense circle, in the centre of which was the royal pavilion: the fate of their comrades in the former expedition caused these additional precautions to be made. The usual tactics of the Dahomans in keeping secret from the soldiers the destination of the army whilst preparing for an expedition, had been less strictly observed on this occasion than usual; for though there was no special announcement made as to what country was to be given up for the war, yet, from what had fallen from their monarch in the affair of the young king of Allaroonah, none doubted but that country would be the scene of their forthcoming battles; for whilst the chiefs urged the king to grant the present war, they also invited the warriors to demand Allaroonah, by painting in brilliant colours the wealth of its inhabitants; exaggerating at

the same time their imbecility and numbers. As for the distance to be traversed, that was looked upon as nothing compared with the booty to be obtained.

Upon approaching the hostile frontier the main body of the army was more and more concentrated, and a large number of light troops thrown out on every side, to give warning of any ambush. Those in advance spread themselves half a day's march from the army, and had orders to conceal themselves from an enemy, unless they were sure to capture or slay him. The march of the Dahomans, however, was unopposed; and when a warrior answered the ringing of his comrade's signal—which none but a practised ear could distinguish from the call of a bird—and advanced cautiously, supposing an Allaroonahan to be concealed amongst the rustling reeds, they came only on the warm lair of some beast that had slunk off upon their approach.

The night previous to the entrance of the Dahomans into the valley of Allaroonah, the royal pavilion was pitched near the spot upon which lay strewn the half-calcined bones of many warriors, whose remains they now beheld, mingled with those of the animals that had perished along with them. The evidences of the

tragedy still remained as marked as when it first occurred; for since that dreadful morning the parched ground had not been moistened by rain; so that not a blade of grass, or even the deeper-rooted bushes had sprung up to conceal the horrors of the scene.

The place of encampment was well chosen; for on the morrow the army would enter the enemy's country, and thus the ardour of the troops could not have time to cool before they were brought face to face with the slayers of their comrades; and truly it was a sight fitted to fill every heart in that barbarous host with the strongest desire for revenge, and add another passion to minds already stimulated by the promise of boundless wealth and thousands of slaves.

A poet or minstrel was ordered to celebrate in extemporary song the heroic deeds of those Dahoman warriors who had there fallen through the displeasure of the Fetish: and to recite to the listening soldiers the rewards and glories that awaited them in the approaching invasion of Allaroonah. At the conclusion of the recitation each general addressed his regiment, pointing out the bravery of their monarch, and extolling his pious zeal in leading his children on to glory; and at the same time giving them an oppor-

tunity to appease the spirits of the warriors by watering their graves with the blood of thousands of Allaroonahans. At the conclusion of these ceremonies the king performed a war dance; and the royal example was followed by many of the ministers and generals. The whole army was then marched past the field of death upon which stood a priest holding aloft, on the point of a spear, a half-burnt skull, and proclaiming in a loud voice that the Fetish demanded the blood of a thousand Allaroonahans.

On the following morning, at sun-rise the same ceremonies were again performed, working the troops up almost to a state of madness. In the meantime the scouts who had been reconnoitering in the valley came in and reported that all was safe from ambush, and shortly after the army began to move up the low range of hills that lay between the open country and the valley of Allaroonah. Not a whisper was heard throughout the ranks: and so eager were the warriors to obtain even a distant view of the town that contained their promised rewards that their speed was gradually increased until they appeared more like cowards fleeing from their foes than warriors advancing into an enemy's country. But when the

crest of the ridge was attained they halted as though by word of command: a spontaneous feeling of astonishment seizing on all as the scene broke upon their ravished eyes.

As many of those Dahomans had lived and fought only on the arid plains, or among the sluggish rivers and swamps of the sea coast, their imaginations could never have pictured spots so lovely; nor had their lungs before inhaled an atmosphere so pure and exhilarating as the mountain breeze that came laden with perfume from the woods and flowers. Some there were amongst them who, having been on distant expeditions, carrying the dread of their name into many a peaceful land, acknowledged with joy that till then they had never believed that earth contained scenes so like those their priests promised as the future abode of warriors in the Land of Spirits.

But there were none of the nobler sentiments of man's nature mingled with these feelings, such as for a time softened the hardy followers of Cortez upon a somewhat similar occasion. For it is recorded that when that small band of fearless adventurers first gazed upon the valley that contained the city of Montezuma they could with difficulty bring themselves to

believe that what lay pictured before them did really exist, but supposed it to be the work of evil spirits whose magic could dissolve it in an instant: and so beautiful and peacelike was the scene that some of them shed tears.

The king was the first to break the spell by firing a musket into the air: he then rushed down the slope uttering the Dahoman war cry, and was followed by his warriors amid the discharge of firearms, beating of drums, and shouts of defiance. At the foot of the hills the real labour of the soldiers began: for in order to render a surprise impossible it had been resolved that as the army advanced up the valley every tree and bush that could conceal an enemy should be cut down, and piled on heaps and burnt. Many an oasis has been all but overwhelmed by the sand storm of the desert, and many a fair tract and rich pasture laid waste by clouds of locusts; but never did sand, storm, or locust commit devastation such as that wrought at Allaroonah: for the valley was "as the Garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness."

Upon the approach of the invaders such of the inhabitants as yet lingered about their homes fled: some to seek the protection of the town; others to the fast-

nesses of the mountains, from whence they were afterwards hunted out by packs of savage dogs. Some few escaped, but the greater number either met with a horrible death or fell alive into the hands of their enemies.

During the last few days Kennee had been kept fully informed of the movements of the Dahomans: for in spite of every precaution his spies penetrated into their very camp; consequently almost the exact time of their appearance was foreknown, and everything at Allaroonah prepared for a strenuous resistance. As the attempt to arrest the march of so large an army of trained warriors, with the much smaller force of the Allaroonahans would have been the extreme of rashness, Kennee resolved to remain on the defensive, hoping by the courage of his troops to protect the siege until his enemies were tired out or driven away by famine.

Myha and her father spent the day in viewing from their new abode on the summit of the natural citadel, the progress of the invaders, which was necessarily slow, the open space round the walls of the town not being reached before nightfall. The advance of these ruthless marauders would have been a painful sight even for strangers to have witnessed, much more for

those who called it their native valley and their home. First fell the noble trees, sacred to memory, and beneath whose leafy canopy many a peaceful evening had been spent in social converse; the anxious gazers next beheld the destruction of their village, the scene of a life-long joy to one, and where the other had passed many happy years surrounded by his children, for so he loved to term all of his own race; and where he had hoped, like the patriarchs of old, to be gathered to his fathers in peace and full of years. But now time itself could not restore for him what a single day had lost; and as he watched the smoke of his burning village curl up the mountain side he felt that his pictured happiness was only a day dream. But these selfish thoughts vanished when he thought of the future of the young and lovely being at his side; and he would have borne a double grief could he have saved his child; but grief and his feeble arm were alike impotent to stem the torrent of Dahoman cruelty.

Myha had watched by her father's side throughout the day, using every art to soothe his sorrow, but success was not vouchsafed her. In the evening Kennee joined them, and by his presence and conversation partially accomplished that in which Myha had

failed—his cheerfulness and confidence reassuring the old man. After spending as much time with his friends as prudence allowed he bade them farewell; but ere he departed the chief placed his daughter's hand in that of the young king, and with a blessing committed the youthful pair to the protection of Allah. "And oh! my son, as you have lived for Myha, and loved her when happiness seemed to be apportioned as her dowry, desert her not now when such a portion can no longer be hers. Thou wilt soon be her only guardian, watch over her as thy greatest treasure; for I feel that the hand of death is already stretched forth to remove me from the trust that has been my greatest source of happiness."

As Myha accompanied Kennee to the brink of the precipice, he informed her that he had learnt it was the intention of the enemy to make an assault on the town at daybreak, and he desired her to supplicate her God to help him, and give his warriors victory over their foes. "For," said he, "should the Fetish be displeased with us, perhaps He may give us aid." "I have always offered up prayers for you Kennee," replied Myha, "nor shall I cease to do so at this time when you most need them. But the religion of Christ is not

like that of your priests: we must wholly trust in Him or He will not hear us. Say then, Oh Kennee, you do not, will not look to the Fetish for aid."

The moment was favourable after the old chief's affecting words, and the appeal strongly urged, but the heart of the young warrior had been too deeply imbued with the superstitions of Fetish worship to relinquish it without a trial. "Pray for me," was his only reply. And after embracing her he leapt into the abyss, and was instantly lost to her view.

As day dawned the keen and ever watchful eye of Kennee detected a body of Dahomans leave the camp and march to the upper end of the valley, a movement they hoped to accomplish unobserved by keeping under cover of the brushwood at the foot of the mountains. This led him to judge that an attack was intended to be made on both sides of the town, and his dispositions for the defence were arranged accordingly. The sequel showed that he had not misjudged the tactics of the enemy.

The first movement took place from the camp, whence the Dahomans rushed to the assault with savage delight, and were allowed to come almost close to the walls before an Allaroonahan showed himself.

Suddenly the whole length was peopled with warriors, and a thousand muskets and bows discharged a deadly shower on the assailants, who wavered, but only for a moment. Again they advanced and again received the galling shower; this time, however, they stood their ground and succeeded in reaching the stockade. The noise, meanwhile, was deafening; for, to the beating of drums and the din of battle, was added the war cries of the contending nations.

The stockade resisted for some time the utmost efforts of the assailants; but no sooner was a breach made than the whole gave way, and in they rushed through the gap with a shout of victory as though the town was already theirs, and its inhabitants bleeding at their feet; but when an ocean wave, rolling against an overhanging cliff, rebounds, and for a moment calms the surrounding waters, so was it with that living wave when an unexpected obstacle arrested its onward flow.

Kennee had placed a large number of sharp-pointed stakes in the bed of the river, a few paces behind, and hidden from the outside by the stockade. These were fixed in an oblique direction, pointing towards the breach, and rose gradually in height; those nearest the stockade being only a span above the ground, rising as

they receded until they attained the height of a tall man. Such was the impetuosity with which the enemy entered that a great number were impaled, pushed on by those in the rear, who were not aware of their comrades' danger. The front ranks in order to extricate themselves turned upon their companions; and at that moment a shower of spears, cast by the men on the towers upon those inside the gap, added to the confusion; a retreat was sounded, but the Dahomans becoming entangled by the broken stockade, every one who had passed it was either killed or wounded. Amidst the disorder in the ranks of the assailants, caused by so unexpected a resistance, Kennee selected a small band of warriors, and by a well-timed sortie spread a panic among them; when the generals, fearing lest the confusion should endanger the camp, drew off their troops and abandoned the assault for the day.

What contributed to their so speedy defeat was, that the attack from the higher part of the valley was not made simultaneously; for, through some unaccountable delay, this division of the army did not come into action before the affair at the lower stockade was all but decided. Here the Allaroonahans leapt from the walls and met their foes outside, obstinately

disputing the possession of every rock in the river's bed until the arrival of Kennee; who, having marched round from the lower side, took the Dahomans in the rear; who, hemmed in on both sides, were forced to retreat with great loss towards the mountains, and so to their camp.

These scenes of war and death were distinctly visible from the summit of the sacred rock, where the priests had been engaged from dawn sacrificing poultry and small animals to their Fetish. This they continued to do until the strife began, when the noise of the joined battle, borne to them by the gentle breeze, filled their hearts with fear, and they commenced dancing and shouting in so frantic a manner that some of them fell down in fits of delirium.

Myha had never before witnessed their religious ceremonies, and the diabolical rites she now saw filled her with more horror than did the scenes below. Fleeing from the huts, she found among the bushes at the edge of the precipice, a hiding place where unobserved she might pour out her heart to God; and never did supplications more pure ascend to the skies than were that morning offered up by the lone and distressed maiden; the only human being amid the tens of

thousands surrounding her who held communion with the Creator of the universe, to whom her adoration would doubtless ascend, and become a sweeter incense than many a petition chanted in all the pomp of cathedral worship by priest and choir.

The moment Kennee returned from the slaughter of the Dahomans, he sent a messenger to the sacred rock, to assure Myha of his safety. This relieved her from all anxiety on his account, and enabled her to attend upon her father with a greater degree of cheerfulness.

Day after day the assault continued; and for four successive mornings was renewed with well sustained vigour; but the defenders of the town showed a fortitude equal to that they had displayed on the first day, encouraged as they were by the example of their young king, and succeeded in repulsing every attack. The Dahoman monarch found he had now met in the young king of Allaroonah, an enemy who was his equal in open warfare; and who had more than once proved himself his superior in stratagem; one who would not hold out his arms for the shackles because it was the king of Abomey bad him, as had some of the neighbouring chiefs. The rough reception his warriors

had met with caused him to pause; and some days passed with only feigned attacks being made, which harassed the defenders almost as much as real ones, without affording them any advantage. About this time, too, the town's people were greatly disheartened by the proceedings of the besiegers with regard to the Fetish; for, having caught a number of white storks, the representatives of their deity, they brought them to an open space not far from the walls; and after subjecting the sacred birds to every indignity they could devise, hung them on a line stretched between two spears. In order to retaliate, the Allaroonahans took a young leopard, (which animal stood in the same relation to the Dahomans that a stork did to themselves), to the top of one of the small towers, and with savage yells put it to death. This was done without the sanction of Kennee, and to his no small annoyance; for as the belief of either nations in its respective deities would not be in any degree shaken, the only result must be the exasperation of an enemy already sufficiently to be dreaded.

In the meantime, the broodings of the Fellatah chief over his accumulated misfortunes brought on a fever which entirely prostrated him, and laid him for the first

time during his life on a bed of sickness. To him the constant turmoils of the beleagured town little accorded, changing, as they did, the whole tenor of his life, and bringing more vividly before his mind the day when his only solicitude was a half pleasing one about the prosperity of his people in the increase of their flocks and herds; and his only fear felt in years long gone by, that the friendship manifested towards him by the king of Allaroonah might not prove lasting; for he had experienced before settling in the valley the faithlessness of negro princes; but both these doubts and fears had been set at rest by the unchanging kindness of Soo-Mah, and the nobleness of character displayed by the young chief, his son; so that he had long regarded with complacency the future of himself and his child.

Myha, too, was reduced to a state of great depression; for she was deprived almost entirely of Kennee's society, who had to be always on the alert so as not to allow the enemy to take him by surprise. Regardless, however, of her own danger, she watched unceasingly at her father's couch, at once his nurse and physician; but the disease was too violent in its nature to be counteracted by her simple medicines; and on the sixth

day of the siege death put an end to his life and sorrows.

In the midst of these bereavements, when almost everything that constitutes the happiness of man on earth was taken away from her, Myha had yet another spring of grief, from which she must take a bitter draught. From childhood she had had a number of attendants apportioned, who, having shared her youthful pleasures and maidenly occupations, looked up to her with a sisterly attachment, which she returned with the confidence of youth and innocence. But there had been no evil day to try the depth of their affection for their mistress, until the storm came and swept away their happy home, and joy and peace fled, and were replaced by scenes of misery and death; then, like summer flowers, they disappeared one by one; and, forgetful of the love that once possessed their hearts, abandoned her to the kind offices of a stranger! And happy was it for Myha that one was found who, in the gratefulness of her heart, rejoiced to show her gratitude by sharing the distress of her deliverer.

This was no less a person than Sung-Noo, a name that signifies a star, or child of the moon, the favourite wife, or slave of the late king, who, as we have already

seen, had left instructions with the priest concerning her; and that thirty days were allowed her to prepare to follow him to the land of Spirits; but as the day upon which she had been commanded to drain the poison cup drew near, her longing to remain on earth became stronger than the desire to join her lord, and she requested permission to live. This had been refused by the priests; whilst her pusillanimity gained for her a reputation not at all envied by the matrons of Allaroonah. As a last resource, she sought the intercession of Myha, who viewed with horror the murderous rite, and at once interceded with Kennee for her. Though the young king disliked the custom at heart, he dared not yield entirely to Myha's request and say she must not die; but he did all his superstition allowed him—he obtained another respite of thirty days from the Fetish men for her. In return for the boon, she was devoting this short term of life to the service of the only one of her sex, who had shown her any compassion.

Kennee had observed in his hasty visits the hopeless state of the Fellatah chief. His surprise, therefore, was not great, when, on ascending the rock one evening, he found Myha weeping by her father's couch; and as

she wept she prayed that God would watch over her; and that instead of repining at the loss of those dear objects it had been his pleasure to remove, she might worthily thank him for sparing to her the best loved, after her parents, of all his blessings. Nor did she omit her usual supplication—"that Kennee might be brought to abjure idolatry, and be led to worship Christ as the only true God."

The heart of the young warrior was softened at this proof of the goodness and affection of Myha, whose short but fervent prayer entered more deeply into his mind than any argument she could have used. His presence was unknown to her until, upon turning, she found him kneeling at her side.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded: and—'They come! to arms! to arms!
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name; to arms!'"

SHELLEY.

THE irksome duties devolving on the chiefs, now that the siege had been changed into a blockade, were as distasteful to them as the more noble and warlike deeds of defending their battlements against the attacks of the Dahomans had been pleasing. A spirit of disaffection sprang up; the natural consequence of inaction with men whose untutored minds never led them to look beyond the time present. At first it was a mere spark smothering in the breasts of a few only, until fanned by some of the priests it gained vitality, and spread its baneful heat into the hearts of warriors who hitherto had made the preservation of Allaroonah their only aim. But they were tools with which cunning men were working out their own designs. The priests who kept the Fetish-house on the Sacred

Rock affirmed, that since the arrival of the Fellatah maiden their young king had frequently joined her in what appeared to be religious ceremonies, thereby bringing upon the whole nation the displeasure of the Fetish, and causing by his impiety the long continuance of the siege. It was a feeling of envy, at being cast into the shade by one whose superiority of mind they could not deny, that worked the most powerfully with the chiefs; but in order to win over the soldiers, some other passion must be wrought upon. They dared not tell them their young king was more wise or brave than he ought to be—that he was too great a warrior; but they threw out some hints of the displeasure of the Fetish, and then having awakened their superstitious fears, called in the aid of the priests, and in this manner succeeded in seducing from their allegiance about a thousand warriors.

The object of the conspirators was to seize the persons of their young king and the Fellatah maiden, and deliver them into the hand of the Dahoman monarch as an earnest of their sincerity: the town was then to be given up to the besiegers, who were to carry off the rest of the inhabitants for slaves, whilst themselves and their children and slaves were to do homage for

their lives, pay an annual tribute, and receive a Dahoman as governor. To these terms the invader had sworn to adhere: but Allaroonah once in his possession he might not have remembered his oath. His majesty's honour, however, was not put to so severe a test, for Kennee discovered the plot on the eve of its execution. And as the conspirators could not hope to receive any sympathy from the mass of the people, and were afraid to oppose themselves to those warriors who, dazzled by the brilliant actions of their young king, yet retained their allegiance, they fled under cover of night to the enemy's camp.

To Kennee's sensitive mind this event awakened thoughts of a most distressing nature. Had he lost these warriors in battle, or if the chiefs had fallen by his side in the defence of their liberty and homes, he could, whilst sorrowing for their deaths as so many brave men lost to their country, rejoice for their own sakes that they were gone to the happy land of Spirits. He had always regarded them more as brothers than subjects: but how had they requited this love and forbearance? By turning their arms against himself and the country that gave them birth.

Reflections such as these cast a shade of melancholy

over his countenance, hitherto radiant with hope, and where every warrior had read with joy the confidence of victory, but now they sought for the promise of it in vain; and when he paid his accustomed visit to the rock, instead of the cheerful greeting with which he at other times met its lovely occupant's smile of welcome, it appeared as though he had only ascended its sacred height in order to brood over some misfortune. Myha observed his changed manner; and though she endeavoured to repress the fear that rose in her mind, she could not; for the beatings of her heart, quick and audible, laid open the intensity of her solicitude, as she seated herself at his feet; and taking his hand in her's she looked up and met his listless gaze with one so earnest that it at once aroused him from his lethargy. "May I not," said she, "bear a part in my Kennee's grief."

"Thou shalt bear a part in everything but that," he exclaimed;" for how can she who is named the "fortunate" pass a life of sorrow. That lovely form, Myha, was not made to preside over this scene of blood, surrounded by dead bodies and birds of prey, but to grace some peaceful abode—to share the lot of the happy and joyous. Flee then war and tumult, for

even yet the mountains may be reached, and then I shall fall possessed of one happy thought, the knowledge that the richest gem of all the spoil of Allaroonah is snatched from the grasp of the Dahoman Tyrant."

"If this were a command," replied she, "how hardly could I obey: but it is only a selfish thought that has even now passed away; for my Kennee knows that I am happy only when he is with me. Our delightful mountain home, could it be restored to what it once was, would not without his presence be half so pleasant as is now the narrow summit of this rock."

"Small as it is, Myha, our foes without, and traitors within will not long permit us to possess it. Treachery has been at work amongst our warriors: the most of whom remain true, but some are gone over to the Dahoman camp."

Myha listened with silent and sorrowful attention to the narrative of the conspiracy, and the flight of the plotters. And here Kennee would have ended his narrative, wishing to spare her the grief he knew she would feel at hearing the cause of the disaffection of the traitors. Nor was he mistaken: for upon learning that the love their young king bore for herself was made the plea by these men for their disaffection; and

that the Fetish-men accused him of bringing all these calamities on his country, by deserting the religion of his ancestors, Myha perceived that she was the first, and indeed the only cause of all his misfortunes. The idea had presented itself to her before, but never in so terrible a form. After a few moments pause she rose; and though her tears still flowed her mien showed that some powerful thought had stirred her gentle mind.

"I will go," said she, "and tell the chiefs who remain that you have not abjured the belief in their Fetish—that you believe all the priests teach about their gods? that they can and will save you and them in the hour of need. And then! oh, then! let me die, for my best, my longest treasured hope will be gone." More she could not utter: but her grief, and the agitation of mind in which she had spoken these passionate words brought a tumult of thought into Kennee's mind, and doubts and fears chased each other in rapid succession.

"I do not, I cannot, believe," replied he, "that our Fetish have powers such as your God possesses. For in the time of greatest misfortune you have only to call upon Him, and invoke His aid, when He enables you to bear all with calmness, nay, even with cheerfulness: to this state of mental controul we cannot attain. Let

us, however, talk of this on some happier day, for at present I cannot reason on the subject." Their discourse still dwelt upon the last event of the siege; and so well did Myha fulfil her pleasing office of comforter that, as the young warrior lept from rock to rock of the precipitous descent, he felt he had regained once more his accustomed confidence. A meeting of the remaining chiefs had been called, and they were awaiting his presence with impatience; but so noble and encouraging were his words and bearing that many, who had gone to the palaver desponding, went away with renewed courage.

Late on the succeeding day a general movement was observed to be taking place in the enemy's ranks, their whole camp seeming to be in a state of commotion; and about mid-day a simultaneous attack took place on four or five points. Never before had the Allaroonahans greater cause to fear for the safety of their town, or felt more truly the value of the animating presence of their young king. The Dahomans fought well, but not with the temerity they displayed at the commencement of the siege, and before sunset retired from before the walls.

Two days passed without a bow being drawn or a

musket fired. This was looked upon by many of the besieged as a good omen; for they supposed that the enemy were beginning to tire, and that some offers for peace would be made. Kennee, however, regarded it in a far different light; looking upon it as merely a prelude to some secret design. When a lion crossed his path its appearance tended only to rouse his courage; but should a serpent, hanging like a leafless branch, or gliding in silence from beneath a stone, raise its hated head to inflict a treacherous wound, he shrank with horror from the deadly reptile: he feared more from the wiles of his Dahoman foes than from their open attacks.

On the third morning after the last assault, a large body of the enemy marched up the valley to join their comrades on the north side of the town, where they had for some time been constructing a stockade across from one range of mountains to the other, in order to prevent any of the besieged escaping through the pass. Here they remained drawn up in battle array, waiting till the morning breeze began to blow when the whole line drew near the walls. Every warrior was attended by a slave, who carried a lighted torch, concealed in a callabash, and a bundle of arrows, to

each of which was attached a tuft of grass dipped in palm oil, and with these placed in their bent bows the warriors waited with impatience for the preconcerted signal, which being given, the slaves ignited the tufts, and immediately the sky was filled with a shower of fiery arrows that hissed as they quivered through the air.

The strongest men in the army had been picked for this service; and such was the strength of their bows, that some of the ignited missiles, aided in their flight by the wind, were carried to an almost incredible distance, spreading terror throughout the belcagured town. The moment was now come when the courage and presence of mind of its young warrior king was to be fully put to the test. Seeing the object the enemy had in view, he caused all the soldiers to be sent to man the walls; and ordered the women and children to endeavour to stifle the flames wherever they broke out by throwing sand upon them. This they succeeded in accomplishing for a little while; but soon the devouring element gained head, for the arrows stuck in the palm leaf thatch of the huts, and the ground being strewed with litter, and thronged with the temporary habitations of the country people, communicated itself from

one place to another, and in a short time a great portion of the town was in flames.

In the meantime Kennee had been passing on from point to point as the enemy gained ground or fell back. At one part they had succeeded in rendering the fortifications useless: a number of slaves, each carrying a log of wood, had advanced under the protection of a heavy fire of musketry, these logs they threw into the ditch and against the walls; thus the warriors were enabled to fight hand to hand with the defenders who were driven back and some of the Dahomans had entered the town when Kennee came to the spot, and with a small band of warriors, charged them, slaughtering all who were inside the town, and dislodging the rest from the wall. In the moment of victory, however, a cry ran through the ranks that the town was lost.

The chiefs to whom the defence of the opposite side had been entrusted, not having the eye and voice of their young king to watch over and animate them, and baffled by the smoke, offered but a feeble resistance to the impetuous assault of the enemy; who having once gained the wall scaled it by thousands. Still the progress of the Dahomans was slow; for the Allaroona-

hans neither expected nor asked for quarter, but fought with the energy of despair.

When the flames had almost reached the foot of the sacred rock, the breeze died away, and the clouds of smoke rising from the half-consumed huts hung in dense masses over the town. The moment Kennee heard the cry that all was lost his thoughts recurred to Myha, for during the heat of combat her image had been banished from his mind. Before the battle joined he cast his eyes towards the spot that held the treasure most dear to him; and on the cliff's extreme edge discerned a female form, and doubted not but it was Myha's; for an instant he had gazed and felt inspired with more than his wonted courage. Now he again cast his eyes in the same direction, but all was hidden from view. Remembering, however, the sanctity of her rocky abode, he exclaimed to Allah and the small band that still hung round him—"Follow me to the Fetish rock; for they who reach it will be safe." Dashing into the smoke he was accompanied by a few of those who were daring enough to be so led.

Of this little band of warriors Kennee and Allah alone emerged from the smoking ruins, and attained the wished for goal. With a shout of joy they sprang

up its charmed side; for, as Kennee sped along, he half doubted the truth of the Fetish's power, but at the same time feared lest the rock should have vanished ere he reached it. But scarcely had he laid hold upon its sacred shrubs than he beheld crowds of half frantic fugitives and priests calling upon the Fetish to send their promised aid by raising them beyond the power of their enemies.

But ere relating the issue of their prayers it will be as well to return to Myha, and learn in what state of mind she had thus far listened, from the rocky height, to the storm of battle as it raged beneath her on every hand: and where she might not inaptly be likened to a timorous gazelle that in present safety, on some cliff, looks down upon the tumult of contending beasts scattering death through the once peaceful vale. Not the least remarkable feature about the rock was a spring of sweet water that bubbled from a basin on its summit in sufficient quantity to irrigate a small garden attached to the Fetish-house; and here Myah's ingenuity had wrought a wonderful and pleasing change, even in the short period during which it had been her abode. This spot had been given up to Myha; and near the margin of the

fountain she entwined a shelter from the sún, forming it of the flowering shrubs which grew there in profusion, strewing the soft sward each day with their brilliant petals. Here it was that, attended by Sung-Noo, the favourite slave of the late king, she passed most of her time, and in which the last happy moments spent in her native valley flew swiftly by.

It was on the evening before the final attack that the lovers, seated by the fountain, forgetful of the future, talked of happiness as though no storm had ever crossed their path. The noise of the different camps was hushed, or rose only as the busy hum of ordinary life: whilst the rays of the declining sun which had left the vale still lingered on the summit of the rock, and gilded the peaks of the Eastern mountains with a golden light. As soon might a traveller expect to find verdure in Etna's crater as we to hear of a scene so lovely, so peaceful in the very heart of a beleaguered town: but Allaroonah could yet boast of such a spot.

Gradually the converse of the lovers was drawn to the future, and then for the first time a shade of melancholy passed over Kennee's brow. "Oh, that this calm," he exclaimed, "might not be again broken!

that we might say that war was for ever banished from Allaroonah! but this cannot be."

Looking upon Myha he expected his gaze to meet her moistened eyes, or that he should feel the hand he held in his tremble: but no—a smile of joy and hope still beamed upon him. "I have seen," said he, "when an antelope has bounded over the plain, outstripping the wind in speed, affrighted at her own shadow; and anon I have seen her—no lioness more brave—stand at bay amid a multitude of foes: and so is it with my Myha. Hope would long since have fled my own breast, alive to all the horrors of war, had it not again and again been renewed from that mine the wealth of which seems inexhaustible. Tell me, then, Myha, how this is—resolve me the mystery."

"It cannot be mere courage, self-reliance—or call it courage if you will—that animates me," replied she; "that alone would never have so changed my nature that I should thus be enabled to sustain with calmness the bitterest bereavements, and witness scenes too horrible to reflect upon, without losing hope;" for Myha had often descended into the town on visits of mercy to the wounded warriors.

"No," rejoined Kennee, "it is not the spirit of which the Dahoman Amazon boasts that won and keeps my love; but one far gentler, though far more powerful. For easier it is to meet an enemy with a steady hand and cool heart, than receive with patience the adverse strokes of fortune; and yet, difficult as is the latter, my Myha has accomplished it when all her joys, all her comforts were snatched away one by one, until everything was gone."

"Not everything," said she, raising her eyes to his;" "I have still one joy left. But as to the source of my calmness, there is no mystery about it—my God sends me comfort from Heaven."

She paused, and still gazing with her eyes fixed on those of her lover, it seemed as though the spirit of her words had entered his heart: and so she thought.

"If your God can do this," said Kennee, preventing the words that were already on Myha's lips, "he is greater than our Fetish. But these we see, know them, speak to them; and when they have borne up this rock, and hidden it from the sight of our enemies by a cloud, then you will be convinced that even they are not without power, and that I have not worshipped in vain."

"I have ever said it was a fable of your priests," replied the lovely sceptic, with a smile of incredulity; "and though I do not believe in the sanctity of this rock, still our foes possess no dread for me so long as the warriors of Allaroonah remain true, and the arm of her king is able to defend her and me."

The evening star, at whose appearance they had usually separated, remained this night a disregarded monitor. For though the theme of their converse had changed, it was one on which Myha delighted to dwell. Whilst to Kennee, the feeling was such as he experiences who for the first time goes to view a mine, and lingering awhile, looks at the cheerful sun before trusting himself in the gloomy bowels of the earth: he was loath to leave the present happiness which he feared the future could not restore to him.

"We shall meet again ere midday," said Kennee, as he took a last embrace. They did meet again—not for sweet converse, when moments glide by in peace—but to prove the depth of their love amid scenes of blood, when the tempest of war was raging in all its horrors.

Early was Myha startled from her morning slumber by the hasty appearance of Sung-Noo, who came in a state of great alarm to tell her that the Dahomans were

advancing from every side to attack the town. Though she had often been called by her faithful attendant for a similar cause, yet now she felt as though some inward voice were telling her that the morning on which her fate was to be sealed had at length dawned.

From the brink of the precipice she looked around, and beheld the thousands of assembled foes that enclosed the doomed town: some marching in compact bodies, others at a greater distance, seeming to fill the vale with their straggling bands. Averting her gaze from this scene she ranged her eyes along the walls below, searching for that form which though far distant she yet hoped loves power would reveal. For some time she looked in vain; nor was it until she saw where danger was most likely to be found, and courage wanted, that she succeeded in distinguishing from the rest of the warriors one whose deeds proved him to be no other than Kennee: from that moment her straining eyes followed his every movement. Her whole frame thrilling with fear when she saw him rush headlong into the thickest battle, and for a moment disappear from her sight. Often have maidens and mothers watched from the sea-girt beach with alternate hope and anguish the boat manned by lovers and sons

striving to reach some stranded ship—at one time they sink from view, and all may be lost: the next moment, however, reveals them, borne aloft on the crest of a curling billow—such joy and fear possessed Myha, but the joy was only momentary.

For a long time she gazed on the scene in the silence of a trance: but when the flames, spread by the fiery arrows, began to obscure the town she uttered a cry of terror, and grasped tighter her attendant's arm. Gradually the increasing smoke rose higher, curled up in eddies by the gusts of wind, until at length all the dreadful scene was hidden by an impenetrable veil. In vain did Myha now endeavour from each projecting crag to penetrate the cloud: some lovely flower, or one of the sacred bushes, growing from a cleff in the rock, marked the extent of the view. Then it was, when all human help seemed impotent to save, and her own strength failed her, that she sought aid from God: and if ought had yet been wanting to convince her that God was God indeed, the consolation she received in such a moment as that would have sufficed:

Hitherto the only persons on the rock, besides Myha and her attendant, were the Fetish-men who had been enacting ceremonies similar to those described in a pre-

vious page: but gradually the cries of terror became more distinct, and rose from the fugitives who were clinging to the bushes that clothed the rock as they strove to reach its summit. This many succeeded in doing, whilst others, impelled by fear, overtasked their strength, and fell from the height they had attained into the ruin below. Myha stationed herself at the head of the path by which Kennee had so often sprung to her side with the bound of a young panther, but up which men, women, and even children were now scrambling, pulling each other over the precipice in their eagerness to gain the sacred height where security from the Dahomans was alone to be found.

Myha, who was now calm and even collected, stood there, like one of the genii of the rock, and grasped the arms of the affrighted fugitives as they came up demanding from each where the king was. Some only regarded her with the vacant look of persons fleeing from death, and who know not if they be in safety: whilst others, pointing to the spot where they had last seen him, shook their heads and passed on in silence.

CHAPTER IX.

"With flattering wordes he sweetly wooed her,
And offered faire guiftes t'allure her sight;
But she both offers and the offerer
Despysde, and all the fawning of the flatterer.
Eternall thraldome was to her more liefe
Than loss of chastitie, or change of love."

SPENSER.

KENNEE, to whom the pathway easiest of ascent was well known, soon attained the precipice's midway height, and turned to urge on his followers; but instead of a compact band of warriors, he beheld only a press of affrighted wretches, and Allah in their midst struggling to free himself from their hold. Some had lost their footing, but clung with the tenacity of drowning men to those who were still on the path; in another moment all disappeared together, the steepness of the declivity concealing them from his view, and leaving not a doubt as to their fate. The war cry of the Dahomans could now be heard above the noise of their martial music and the din of battle, ringing in the ears of the Allaroonahans with as ominous a sound as

the cry of the petrel when heard by mariners above the roar of winds and waves. Though but too long familiar with the dreadful clamour, it now struck a deeper terror into every heart than heretofore—to the warrior it brought the dread of slavery, to the faint-hearted the fear of death.

One portion of the town, dimly visible from where Kennee stood, was a mass of ruins; but this presented a fair scene compared with that which met his gaze as the smoke rolled away from another quarter of the town, for there were being enacted deeds too horrible for description—deeds that once witnessed not time itself could efface. Sickened by the sight he cast his eyes up the steep, and catching a momentary glance of her he came to guard, he sprang on, and the next instant she was in his arms; but her gentle spirit strained beyond nature's endurance, was overpowered by a flood of joy. That, however, was not a time for delay, so placing her lifeless form on the ground, he took his stand at the head of the path, and snatched the spears from the unnerved grasp of such of the fugitives as had retained their weapons. One of these he poised in his upraised hand, and thus awaited the appearance of the foremost foe.

Nor had he long to wait; for the bushes which the Fetish were to have transformed into clouds to baffle and bewilder the enemy, served only to aid him in the ascent. A Dahoman officer, an Amazon, led the assault; but no sooner was her white cap visible among the leaves fringing a ledge some distance below, than instantly the spear left the young warrior's hand, and the next moment there was a sharp cry from the bushes, and a noise of loose stones bounding from crag to crag; the Amazon's lifeless body had swept the rocky height. Eight times was that arm uplifted, and each time a messenger of death went down; but no sooner had one foe received her doom than another appeared, as though courting death from so noble a hand.

Myha, meanwhile, had slowly recovered consciousness, but she seemed only to have done so to be made aware that the duration of her own and her lover's liberty, perhaps their lives, might be computed by moments; resolved to share his fate, whatever that might be, she remained at his feet watching every spear as it flew, well knowing that should it fail their dread foes would the next instant attain the summit. So intent was she upon the motions of her defender,

that a number of Amazons, who had succeeded in reaching the top of the rock by another path which the terror-stricken Allaroonahans had left unguarded, were close upon them before she became aware of their approach. At the unexpected presence of these foes she uttered a shriek, shrill as the death cry of the hunted hare, causing Kennee's arm to fall to his side. He turned to save her, but had only time to draw his sword and make the Amazon who had seized on Myha pay dear for her temerity, when a blow from a club stretched him on the ground. At the same moment one of the Amazons threw a thick veil over Myha, who was borne off, a precious prize, to the pavilion of the Dahoman monarch, who she was from that day to call her lord.

While these scenes were being enacted, all resistance had ceased in the town, and cruelty stalked triumphant through it. Death in many a form was there; and crimes that blast the name of man with infamy were that day perpetrated in Allaroonah. Bands of Dahoman soldiers, maddened by the long resistance they had met with, now took a full revenge. Every hut spared by the flames was made the theatre of a tragedy in which the infants and all the old or badly wounded of both sexes were included in a common doom; to

the rest their lives were granted, unless they attempted to defend a parent or child, and then they met the death they almost courted.

The confusion caused by the sacking of the town was seized upon by a small number of Allaroonahan warriors, who still retained their presence of mind, to escape to the mountains. Placing their families in the midst of the band they made a sortie, and the movement being unexpected by the Dahomans, succeeded without much difficulty in reaching the shelter of the rocks. Others however, who had followed when too late, were overtaken before the place of refuge was attained, and a few moments sufficed to terminate their last chance of liberty.

The terrible scene was continued inside the walls without cessation until the approach of evening, when the soldiers were commanded to collect the captives and place them under a guard in temporary enclosures until the next morning. No distinction was made of sex or condition, but all met one fate, with a single exception, the captive king, who was treated with an attention that warned him of the death for which he was reserved; a doom the crafty Dahoman monarch feared he would evade by self-destruction, and there-

fore took his measures accordingly; but he knew not the feelings of a brave man, nor had his sensual mind ever felt the power of love for a fellow being, for then would he have known that so long as the captive warrior was unassured of the death of her he loved, so long would life be sweet to him.

To capture the young king and the Fellatah maiden was the true object of the war; for the possession of the latter had long been the most ardent wish of the monarch, though master of a thousand female slaves. He had caused it to be proclaimed throughout the host, that if the king of Allaroonah was killed either by accident or design, the slayer's life should be forfeited. But, that if brought into the camp alive, to his captor, if a soldier, one of the monarch's daughters should be given in marriage, and he should be further rewarded by a treble number of slaves; if an Amazon, she should espouse one of the royal brothers. The reward for the safe capture of the Fellatah maiden was of a similar nature, only that a dowry of ten slaves would be added. The storming of the rock was given up to the Amazons, for should any male look upon the maiden, his life would be sacrificed. Thus both the royal captives fell into the hands of the Amazons.

As soon as the two great prizes were secured, the victors turned their arms against the other occupants of the rock: these offered no resistance, and were either cut down by their merciless foes, or cast over the precipice; not a male was spared, lest any should live to say they had looked upon the royal slave. A few of the females only escaped death, and these not through pity, but because they would be valuable merchandise.

The summit of the rock being thus freed from danger, the Amazons had leisure to look to the state of their prisoner. They placed him at the fountain's edge—having first pinioned his arms, for they were afraid to trust his courage even when unarmed—and commenced bathing and dressing the wounds he had received in the battle. This had the effect of restoring him to consciousness, for he had only been stunned by the blow of the club; but it was long ere he could collect his thoughts sufficiently to recal what had just passed. The spot in which he lay was the very one where the previous evening he had spent the happy moments in sweet discourse with his Myha; and now this recurred to his mind, leading him on to remember how he had last beheld her at his feet, and then the truth burst upon him.

When startled by her piercing cry, he turned and for a moment defended her; in that moment he had seen her all but in the power of her savage foes. His memory dwelt upon this picture in all its deep colouring, and he knew that she must either be a captive or numbered among the happy dead; and whilst fearing the former had been her lot he yet cast a look of hope towards the place where she had sat. But he soon withdrew his gaze—for the bodies of his slaughtered subjects, which almost covered the ground, alone met it—except when his eyes were offended at the sight of the wretches who had committed these atrocities. And well might they be offended; for, stained with blood, and excited by the most debasing of passions, they bore no resemblance to the sex to which they belonged, but whose name and nobler characteristics they discarded.

When Kennee's guards perceived their prisoner was recovering, they uttered a joyful shout. His first inquiry was about the Fellatah maiden; but it was only after repeating the question that one of those who stood near replied—"That the Fetish had taken her from the coward who was not worthy to retain so beautiful a slave, and had bestowed her on the king of

Dahomy." Nor could he learn anything further, as they turned a deaf ear to all he said.

At nightfall a messenger came to say that the prisoner must remain on the rock until morning, when his captors were to set out with him for Abomey, accompanied by a thousand Amazons, and be answerable with their heads for his safe custody there until the completion of the war.

We must now return to the other captives, only one of whom, however, demands a separate notice. Myha, when borne to the Dahoman monarch's pavilion, was placed an unresisting captive in one of its apartments; and as she lay on a cushion of the richest silk, her graceful form was half concealed in its soft and luxuriant embrace. A great and wonderful change was soon wrought in her outward appearance: a loose robe of figured satin concealed her own soiled and torn garments, and her flowing hair was again collected and carefully arranged, whilst every stain was removed from her hands and face. All this had been effected by the assiduity of those female slaves whom the king had chosen to wait upon him during the expedition.

Few of them evinced the slightest commiseration for Myha, and all were envious of that beauty which for a

time would banish every rival from the favours of their royal master. Great was the confusion of words and laughter, for some endeavoured to disparage each particular feature, or condemn the length and glossiness of her hair; whilst others made merry at the sight of her grief, which their servile minds could not appreciate, supposing it to be feigned. During these trying moments, after the completion of her hasty toilet, the hands of the captive maiden were clasped over her eyes, and though they hid the scene, they could not prevent the workings of her mind, or stay her tears from flowing.

Presently a messenger came to announce the approach of the king, and express his majesty's wish to be alone; so that when he entered the apartment there was no one but the fair captive in it. Of lofty stature, and richly, and even tastefully attired, the whole mien of the king was august and commanding; whilst his bearing showed that he was accustomed to receive reverence.

He only advanced as far as the centre of the apartment—where he stood a few moments, and looked much surprised when the occupant of the couch came not to kiss the ground at his feet; but as she neither

moved nor seemed aware of his presence, he approached, and gently removed her hands from before her eyes. She looked up and met his gaze. The monarch had imagined that a single glance would fill her youthful mind with awe; or that sordid passion, now that the semblance of virtue was of no further use, would assert its sway. He judged the Fellatah maiden by the standard of his female slaves; to whom his every look was joy or fear as its expressions might be; but he knew not the power of virtue or love; or he would not have obtruded himself so soon into the presence of the captive maiden.

She evinced no sign of either awe or pleasure; but, turning away her face, burst afresh into a flood of tears. The king remained some time feasting his eyes on the gem he had so long coveted, and which now sparkled in all its purity at his feet. In this pleasing reverie, he forgot the price he had paid for it; or imagined that He who had placed it in his keeping could also call for a reckoning.

At length he broke silence.—"Slave," said he, "canst thou love me?" and bending over her he was about to take her hand in his own, when she shrunk from him with a feeling of horror; and starting up,

her hitherto placid countenance assumed an expression of indignation mingled with disgust, such as had never before passed over it to mar its loveliness.

"Touch me not, base man," she exclaimed; "The blood of him who should have been my husband is not yet cold on the hands of thy soldiers, and yet thou bidest me love thee. I have merely to unfold this deceptive robe to show thee what it hides; for there are blood stains beneath its fair outside—see; see; here are the marks of his blood—his whom thou hast just slain—and yet thou comest softly, saying, love me. Canst thou give me back my father, and restore my once happy mountain home with all its joys; or art thou able to deprive memory of its power? Not any of these canst thou do, and yet thou talkest of love. I am thy captive, and my life is in thine hand to take when thou mayest choose; but not my honour. Thy bitterest revenge will be joy now, for it will be death; and I would rather die a hundred deaths than keep my life on the terms thou offerest. Leave me! begone!"

"I go," said he, "but only for a time; for luxury and ease will conquer a woman sooner than commands."

When he had left the apartment Myha had sunk on the couch, and a long period of oblivion ensued.

On the following morning at sunrise the king issued from his pavilion in royal state, accompanied by his ministers and a large retinue. The moment his majesty appeared he was saluted by a burst of discordant sounds; for, in addition to the drums and trumpets, there were the war cries of the soldiers. The different regiments were then paraded before him, almost every warrior carrying the head of an Allaroonahan or some other trophy of victory. Many fell at his feet and worshipped him as their god, whilst the Fetish men performed war dances, or recited extemporary verses in his honour. These ceremonies continued far into the day, and terminated in a war-dance by the king.

The second day after the siege a scene commenced in which, had the actors been the veriest savages on the face of the earth, it would have been no palliation for the atrocities committed. Yet the men who took the greatest interest and seemed most delighted were not savages by name, nor even Dahomans, but belonged to the all-powerful race of white men—men who styled themselves civilized, and gloried in the appellation of Christians. Well might the brow of

the noble-minded Kennee become dark at the mention, even by her he loved, of the white man's name and the white man's religion; such as the young chief conceived them all to be, were they who attended at that time on the king of Dahomy.

They were only three in number, but they represented many others of equally brutish minds. One of these men was a Spaniard named Don Diego de Baza, born in Old Castile, and descended from a noble family, whose ancestors had attained their honours so long back as the wars of Ferdinand and Isabella. He had received the education of a gentleman, and inherited all the pride and gaiety of disposition characteristic of a high-born Spaniard. After squandering his patrimony he lived for some time the life of a debauchee, until, at lenght, having disgraced the family name by his crimes, he was banished to the island of Cuba. Proud at being a native of the mother country, his arrogance soon embroiled him with the free Creole population, and his stiletto having been used with fatal results in an affray in the streets of Havanna, he made a precipitate retreat to the island of Porto-Rico. Here he accepted the office of overseer on an estate, in which capacity he displayed great

tact, so much so, as to be fixed upon by the planters of the island as a fit person to send out to Western Africa as their agent for the purchase of slaves. This was an occupation for which his disposition highly qualified him; and, whilst giving him an opportunity of enriching himself as well as his employers, it offered to his unsettled mind a new field of adventures. Such was the most notable of the white slave buyers; the other two need no particular description—they were Brazilian subjects—one an adventurer, the other, of pure Portuguese blood, an agent for a company at Rio de Janeiro.

These three, however, had not the market entirely to themselves, there being five or six men of colour either slave-dealers or agents. All were the vultures of trade, led to the spot by the smell of blood; for in Western Africa the storm of war is almost invariably the ill wind that fills the slaver's hold. The manner of disposing of the captives was a very simple process, no sort of auction being gone through, but a price per head having been agreed upon between the king and the dealers, each purchaser took one in rotation as they were brought forward, which was done irrespective of age or sex, until his gang was completed.

The spot selected for the morning's proceedings was a level piece of ground close to the Dahoman camp; and here, under a tent open at the front, was placed the stool of state for his majesty, and mats were spread outside for the principal ministers and the slave merchants. A little way removed was a large fire, near which lay heaps of iron and leather manacles.

When the king had taken his seat, and the usual forms of state were gone through, the miegan or prince of the executioners came forward, and with a number of assistants took his place near the fire. Every thing being ready, the signal was given for the drums to be beaten, when a poor trembling wretch was dragged to the fire and thrown on the ground. The miegan had previously received from each merchant the device he wished marking on his slaves, and these irons being kept red-hot the shrieking victim was branded, and then, writhing with agony, hurried away, and immediately another supplied his place.

This scene was much enjoyed by the assembled thousands, and was continued until sunset, with only a short intermission during the mid-day heat. Every tenth captive, whether old or young, male or female, was consigned to the safe keeping of the priests, and

received by them with every demonstration of joy. These were the victims intended for sacrifices to the Fetish at the customs to be held upon the return of the army to Abomey.

CHAPTER X.

—" Or to live or die,
To him was equal; fortune's tempest dread
Could frown no further vengeance on his head;
Though bound a captive, and in fetters, still
Shone through his soul the unconquerable will;
His aspect nobly bold, from innate valour bred."

FROM THE SPANISH OF EPCILLA.

At the close of the day the number of slaves branded amounted to above four thousand; consequently there must have been reserved for sacrifice between four and five hundred persons. These were the only Allaroonahans who still remained alive, except the few that escaped to the mountains; the rest having fallen during the siege, or been massacred by their savage conquerors. And more to be envied by far were the dead than the living that day at Allaroonah: so felt some of those who, bewildered by their dreadful situation, would have destroyed themselves had they not been strictly guarded, in order to join, as they fondly imagined they should, their friends in the land of spirits.

After being handed over to their respective purchasers they were manacled, and then linked together in gangs of fifteen or twenty; a collar of iron or leather was fixed round the neck of each slave, and the whole connected by chains. These shackles were never removed until the gang arrived at the sea coast, except for the purpose of leaving on the line of march some poor wretch, too feeble to drag himself along. A few of those thus left recovered sufficiently to escape to some place of safety; but most of them were torn in pieces by the beasts of prey that lurked in the rear of the company, following their track in large numbers, and seldom lacking a supper. True it was that many of the captives were only changing one kind of slavery for another; but there was almost as wide a distinction between the state of the slaves of Allaroonah and those of America, as there is between a criminal and a peasant; for as the latter is compelled by necessity to labour for his daily food, and whilst doing this profits his master, so was it at Allaroonah; the slave toiled a short time each day for his owner, the remainder being at his own disposal.

The greatest dread of the captives was that of being eaten by the white men; and though some appeared

little moved by their situation, and a few were even merry, yet on many a countenance were marks of grief too deep to be ever again effaced. Yet how could it be otherwise? Here was a mother whose infant had been butchered before her eyes—a young man who had seen his bride die under the cruel treatment of an enemy—or a maiden whose chains placed her at the mercy of lawless men. None such as these, and they were by far the most numerous, could ever hope to behold again the beings once so endeared by all the ties of kindred, affection, and home. And could they look upon the change without regret? There can be but one answer. The passions implanted in the heart of man by our great Creator forbid it; and it were a libel on human nature to say otherwise.

In order to avoid the effluvia arising from the bodies of the slain, the Dahoman camp was removed from before Allaroonah to the site of the Fellatah village. Here it remained a few days, during which, all the warriors presented themselves before the king, and laid at his feet the spoils acquired by the pillage. If anything attracted the royal notice it was reserved, and the rest restored to the plunderer.

Meanwhile the slave dealers had left the valley with

their living merchandise, accompanied by a guard of Dahomans. And at sunrise on the tenth morning after the sacking of Allaroonah, the camp broke up. The army marched in three bodies: the van consisting of several regiments of male warriors; then came the royal household surrounded by the Amazons, and the remainder of the troops, six thousand strong, brought up the rear: the camp was formed each evening in a manner similar to that observed when the army was marching on Allaroonah.

To Myha the days during which the Dahomans lingered in the valley, had been days of the deepest sorrow. How many happy years had she spent on the spot where she then lay a helpless captive in the hands of the man who had hastened her father's death, and brought ruin and slavery to hundreds of her race? But the latter was little when she remembered Allaroonah, which the same power had swept away with its inhabitants, and, it might be, its king also. For, though she had received no intimation that he still lived, yet as the thought that she was left alone in the world was too terrible to be entertained, she allowed a ray of hope to cast its brightening influence over the dark future.

But thoughts such as these were seldom of long con-

tinuance; they were for herself alone; for him she wished a warrior's death rather than that he should be reserved to grace the victor's triumph, and then be offered up an acceptable sacrifice to the shades of the Dahoman tyrant's ancestors. These fancies were continually presenting themselves before her mind; for though so horrible she could not repress them. As to her own fate, knowing the designs of the Dahoman monarch, she left the issue to her God, not trusting to her own judgment, which she knew might in some moment of weakness or trial, betray her into the power of her foe. As yet he had not again presented himself to her; and so long as he abstained from doing so, she bore with silent sorrow the taunts and laughter of many of the females who surrounded her.

Some indeed had attempted to console her—they had once been like her, pure and innocent, and still could feel for the lovely captive's grief; for seldom is it that when once a woman's heart has tasted true sorrow, that it does not soften at the sight of a youthful maiden's tears, though many years of crime may have blunted the feelings. Amongst those whose minds were of more tender mould was a youthful negress, who had been for a short time the favourite slave of the Dahoman

monarch. When first a captive, she had wept with unfeigned grief; but ere long home and even parents were forgotten in the delights of dress; and she soon learnt to value the deference paid to her as a royal slave above the freedom she had lost. She knew not, or had forgotten, the fickleness of a tyrant's favour; but of this she could no longer be ignorant, when the new object of his attachment was become an inmate of his household, and so felt again all her former sorrow. At first this was only a selfish feeling; a regret at the certainty of losing her position as the king's favourite. Myha's gentleness, however, soon gained the full esteem of a heart so susceptible of kindness; and then her own sorrows were forgotten, and she mingled her tears with those of the lovely stranger, thinking that sympathy would bring relief; but upon finding that through this means she only fostered grief, she would change her manner, and gently chide her friend.

And then again another fancy possessed her, and she would display before Myha some of the attractions of her prison house—rich stores of feminine ornament and dress—hoping thus to entice her, if only for a time, to forget the loss of liberty and friends; but when this stratagem also failed in dispelling Myha's melancholy

musings, her comforter hit upon a deep stroke of policy, and insisted in arraying her in the choicest vestments she could pick from the abundant supply before them. Robes of silk from Persia and Morocco, and rich shawls from Hindoostan, were turned over in order to select those best suited to her complexion and most in harmony with each other. How would Myha have loathed these gorgeous garments had she known they were the price of blood; that to obtain them many a poor being had been sold into slavery, and doomed to a life of toil and misery in Egypt or Barbary

In the arrangement of these dresses the kind negress displayed no small degree of taste; and having accomplished it to her own satisfaction, commenced tiring her friend's hair; but here Myha was obliged to assist her in disposing of its glossy folds, after which she intertwined amongst her tresses flowers of silver, and bound them with chains of gold and strings of pearls. All this, however, was only lost labour—such a loveliness as that possessed by the Fellatah maiden needed not the aid of rich attire, nor could gems add to it one real charm. After expending all her skill, the young negress would bring a mirror and place it before the captive, that she might know how lovely she was, and

how much to be desired were those things she so lightly esteemed. But Myha would only smile at the innocent attempts of her friend to beguile her heart with that which she now regarded as worthless; and repaying her with a kiss quickly put them off, fearful of the presence of her tormentor, who, should he find her thus arrayed, might renew his suit, thinking she had thus decked herself to please him.

The army marched slowly, making frequent halts; nor was it till the twenty-second day after leaving the valley of Allaroonah that the royal pavilion was pitched beneath the white walls of Abomey. The usual rejoicings, or customs as they are termed by the Dahomans, were now commenced, and as the war had been one of great magnitude, so the ceremonies and festivities were to be on an equally grand scale. The transactions of these few days are, however, of too horrible a nature to be recounted, and a veil shall be drawn over them; suffice it to say, that of all the captives placed in the hands of priests none remained alive on the fourth day of the customs. But there was still reserved a grateful sacrifice to the Fetish, left till the last day of the feast; and he no less a victim than the young king of Allaroonah.

The noble captive had been placed in the court-yard of a small hut, and kept heavily ironed. Here he underwent indignities at the hand of any who chose to insult him; yet his nobleness of mien never forsook him, and he retained the same undaunted heart that shrunk not from death, but could rather have contemplated the change as a happy one had he been assured that his Myha was gone before him. This, however, he feared was not the case. He knew how deep was her love for him, but had he doubted for a moment that it would withstand the allurements of pleasure or the threats of a tyrant, he had done her an injustice. Could he have witnessed, on the morning destined by his enemies to be his last, what was passing in one of the apartments of the palace he would not have feared to leave Myha even when in the power of his bitterest foe, for she had proved that love was stronger than the desire of life without that love, that life had no pleasures for her except its allurements were shared by a spirit congenial with her own.

The tyrant, hoping that time would have lessened her hatred of him, had endeavoured, first by flattery, then by threats, to gain her over to his wishes; but she repelled him with such scorn and determination as

to convince him that force alone could make her his slave. Maddened by this repulse, his savage mind revelled in the contemplation of the misery and shame he could heap upon her. She had told him she feared not death: he would make her undergo that, which to her, would be worse than many deaths. And first he resolved she should witness the day's customs, for he knew that she supposed her lover to be dead; but when she saw him alive and about to be sacrificed to the Fetish, then he would tempt her with a promise he meant not to perform.

A mock trial was to be held, and the royal captive paraded before the assembled thousands, slaves as well as warriors being present. The barbaric pomp of the Dahoman court, and the splendour of the chiefs, together with the gay aspect of Abomey during the customs, have all been frequently dwelt upon by travellers, so that any particular description of them here would be superfluous. The monarch was seated on the stool of state, beneath a canopy of party-coloured silk: in front stood three baskets full of the heads of sacrificed Allaroonahans; whilst behind, but hidden by a curtain, were some of the king's female slaves. The whole scene was one of barbarous magnificence and

gaudy grandeur, the gay and mirthful appearance of the vast concourse of people contrasting strongly with the transactions they came to witness.

At some distance, removed from the king, was an European, the only one at that time in Abomey, and whose presence at such a meeting might possibly be accounted for by a strong desire to study the people amongst whom his lot was temporarily cast, for on his countenance were none of the signs of ferocious joy so marked on the features of the surrounding throng, but his appearance and dress betokened him a man of peace; and this was proved by the changes that passed over his intellectual face as his pity or disgust became excited by what he then saw. He was an Englishman and a missionary; a man who had left wife and country in order to preach the name of Christ to the benighted sons of Ham, in a region pronounced by travellers to be under the ban of pestilence. No sordid motive could have induced him to do this. Mere worldly ambition was not to be satisfied there. Nor did he go in all the pomp and vanity of human greatness and self-sufficiency, as did the Jesuit fathers of old to the poor Mexicans, with a crucifix in one hand and a fagot in the other, but to prove the beauty of holiness

by his very humility; and the fruits already gathered were an earnest of the blessing bestowed on his labours by the Giver of the harvest.

He was one of a number of missionaries sent out by one of the religious societies of England to the smaller states of Nigerita, and the success attending the mission having caused no little uneasiness to the slave hunting chiefs, threats had been uttered by them, but more particularly by the king of Dahomy; in consequence of which it had been thought advisable to endeavour to obtain a treaty of friendship with that monarch, whose example might sway the conduct of others. This, therefore, was the object that had brought the Englishman, at that time, to the court of Abomey. He was a man about forty years of age; his figure tall, bony, and spare, and though his features were large and far from handsome, yet the general cast of his countenance was pleasing and impressive, and few among those untutored races who once saw him, and heard the gracious words he spoke, but were impressed with a new feeling. Such was the English missionary: a man worthy to be styled "a pioneer of civilization."

Much time was spent in listening to the fulsome flattery bestowed on the king by the Fetish-men, who

chanted it forth in a sort of extemporary song. At length the signal was given for the royal captive to be brought forward, and when the people beheld the man who had so long braved the terror of their name, and withstood the power of their arms, the cries became almost deafening; nor was it without the greatest difficulty they could be restrained from tearing him in pieces. The king, fearing to be deprived of his revenge, rose, and firing off a musket, stilled the enraged multitude, but not before some had struck the captive, scowling on him with malignant hatred. The young warrior, however, resented not the insult; but with a firm step and undaunted mien walked towards the royal seat; and as he stood, with folded arms, his fine countenance and noble bearing bespoke for him the secret good wishes of many who surrounded him; and even the Amazons themselves, his bitterest enemies, could not remove their eyes from him. No curl of proud disdain was on his lip—too often but the mask that hides the sinking courage; no look of defiance; but a calmness that showed he had anticipated his doom, for he remained throughout the whole scene unchanged, though apparently those moments were to be his last.

Immediately on the left of the royal victim was the miegan, the chief executioner, with his axe and block. But before these were used any person had the privilege of accusing the captive of such charges as they could bring against him; consequently the witnesses were not few in number. The accusations, principally made by the Amazons, commenced with his refusal to give up the Fellatah maiden, and were carried down to the sacking of Allaroonah; whilst some even went so far as to construe his silence since that event into a crime.

The witnesses were frequently interrupted by quarrels between the officers, as to whose regiment had displayed the most courage during some particular event of the war; and as the whole transaction was enlivened by the chantings of the Fetish-men they took up a considerable time, the sun having attained the meridian before this part of the proceedings terminated. The captive was then asked what he had to say in his defence, whereupon he drew himself up from his position of rest, and before speaking cast his eyes round the vast assembly—

"It has already been determined by you," said the captive, "that I shall this day be offered up to your

Fetish. And had I not been thus prejudged, as well might an antelope attempt to reason with a pack of jackals, as I to defend myself here by words; for having this morning learned that in your eyes it is a crime for any one, not a Dahoman, to endeavour to keep those gifts with which the Great Spirit has blessed him; I must to such a charge say that I am guilty, and so be judged worthy to die."

A cry of terror, uttered by a female voice from amongst the king's slaves, caused a momentary interruption; but at the command of the Mayo all was again still, and the captive proceeded, "Should the king of Dahomy imagine that I am about to sue for my life at his hands,—that I, a man free born, will demean myself so much as to supplicate for that which he holds neither through the valour of his troops nor by his own skill, but obtained through treachery and every breach of friendship—then I tell him, and all ye, his soldiers, and ye his unseemly, unwomanly slaves, for ye are too base to bear any other name"—

This expression brought every Amazon to her feet, and for a long time nothing but their maddened shouts could be heard. Some levelled their muskets at the audacious captive; whilst others were prepared to rush

upon him with their knives. The king having restored silence, an old chief remarked, "when a hunter has enticed a buffalo into a pit, how pleasant it is to him to stand by, and listen to his impotent bellowings." The stillness that followed proved how all felt the truth of this observation; and after a short pause the captive resumed.

"I say that I will not accept even the boon of life from such a nation, though it would be as precious to me as to the happiest amongst you were I assured that she lived with honour for whom I now stand in chains, for then I might, perchance, save her. And why do I now stand here laden with fetters of iron? Not because I was a faithless ally to the Dahomans; nor because I and my people were cowards,—else you make yourselves worse than the cowards who so long kept thrice, aye, four times their number at bay; but because the enemies of my country were many and treacherous. You wanted the white man's merchandise, and the white man wanted slaves, so you asked of Allaroonah that which you knew Allaroonah could not, would not give. But she has sold her life's blood at a price which the mothers and daughters of Abomey will live long ere they cease to remember. How did the Daho-

mans tremble when our war cry told them that the eagle's eyry was not to be robbed by women alone. And few, very few of that band of female slaves escaped to tell to their master at Abomey how sharp the spears of Allaroonah were, and how irresistible was a war of elements. But did even those poor wretches fleeing from death find the life they sought? When I was last at Abomey I saw, at your gates, the heads of three Dahomans—the innocent victims of a tyrant's rage, a people's revenge; and they who were with me said, 'these are the heads of some of the cowards who were frightened by ten thousand Allaroonahans.' Lust on the one hand, shame and madness on the other, now urged you on; and the Great Spirit has laid Allaroonah in the dust, and placed such of her people as remained alive in your power; but the blood of the slain will one day be required at the hands of you or your children. To the soldiers has fallen the bulk of the plunder; and to your lot the possession of the gem you so long coveted. But if there be truth in woman's love, never, never, I say, will you be able to boast of having robbed that gem of its lusture; and so the blood of the thousands of Dahomans who fell before the walls of Allaroonah will have been shed in vain. I have uttered bitter words;

words that bear a double sting, for they are true, and because I had no friendship to forfeit; for as I look around I see enemies on every side, and not one among your nation whose esteem I could lose, or whose life I might endanger;"—here the captive's eyes met those of the white man, who had been listening in astonishment to his bold language; the momentary glance told him he had one friend present—"and no face," he resumed, after an almost imperceptible pause, "except the white man's has upon it a trace of sympathy for the sole representative of a slaughtered nation, whose only crime was its courage, its only misfortune the beauty of its daughters. But the attrocities committed in the valley were as good deeds compared with those consumated since your return. You murder unarmed victims, and call it sacrificing to the Fetish; and tell the people that your ancestors' graves must be watered with blood: but it is to satiate your own savage natures, and not to please the Fetish, that you do these things. And though they may please a Dahoman assembly, the glorious sun is ashamed to let his light shine upon them: he leaves you to put the final stroke to your cruelties in darkness, which may conceal the act; but, nevertheless, the anger of the Great

Spirit will not be appeased. Behold how he draws a veil between you and him!"

As the captive spoke the last words he stretched his hand towards the then vertical sun, and every eye followed the directing finger. An instantaneous panic seized the assembled thousands, who fell prostrate with their faces to the ground. The royal victim had spoken truly; the sun was already partially obscured.

CHAPTER XI.

"'Tis he, 'tis he, where's now the torturing pain?
Where are the fetters? where the dungeon's gloom?
'Tis thou, 'tis thou, to save me thou art come;
And I am saved."

GOETHE.

A PROFOUND stillness reigned amongst the terror-stricken Dahomans, until a shriek from the spot on which the king's female slaves had been concealed broke the silence, and one fled from thence with the speed of a hunted gazelle, and the next moment was enfolded in the arms of the royal captive. It was Myha, who, in the struggle to escape, had left her veil and the outer garment which had hung loose upon her shoulders; and as Kennee pressed her to his heart he felt the fluttering of joy in her bosom, and her hot tears falling on his naked breast.

From the resignation of a stoical indifference to everything that might happen to him, he now became the man of former days, because he was again the guardian of his Myha. And as her arms encircled his

neck he loosened his own hold of her, and placing his hands together snapped the chain with which they were bound. He then took a dagger from the paralysed grasp of one of the fallen Dahomans, and with a loud voice commanded attention. "Behold," he exclaimed, "the prize for which you have fought—the reward of your country's blood—the share of the spoil that your master would have retained for himself had not the Great Spirit forbade it."

Hereupon he turned the face of the unconscious maiden towards the people, whose curiosity overcame their fear, and she, the chosen of their monarch, to look upon whom but a few moments before would have been instant death, was now exposed to the gaze of thousands of men, who could not suppress their admiration of her beauty. The king was by this time recovered from the first shock of fright, and at a glance perceived his long coveted and dearly purchased treasure in the arms of his intended victim. In the first impulse of anger he drew a dagger from his girdle, and starting up was about to rush upon them, when Kennee's voice arrested his step.

"Hold," he exclaimed, pointing the weapon he held in his hand to the maiden's heart, "or before thou

reachest us we shall both be beyond thy power." The dagger's point had already penetrated the folds of Myha's dress ere the tyrant drew back.

The darkness, meanwhile, became each moment more marked, and the women and children, clustering together, gave utterance to their fears in cries of terror; and even the soldiers and Amazons, though they remained quiet, were filled with dread. The priests were now commanded to retire to their Fetish-houses and learn by what omission, during the customs, the Fetish had been displeased, and how the king was to act in order to propitiate them. This they were to do in haste, ere the displeasure of the Fetish fell upon them. Whilst the priests were absent, every sort of noise possible was made, in order to keep off the evil spirits that they supposed to be hovering near, for the moaning of animals, and the howling of dogs that came terror-stricken amongst the throng, were mistaken by them for supernatural sounds.

The belief that the destruction of the world was threatened had seized upon the people, and the idea that the two captives were in some way or other the cause of it, made every one remove to a distance from them. And thus Kennee, relieved from the too close

proximity of his former guards, ventured to place Myha on the ground, and, seating himself by her, supported her head from the burning sand; the absence of all restoratives, however, caused her return to conciousness to be slow.

The position in which the Englishman was placed was a novel one; he had come to be the voluntary witness of a scene that, under other circumstances, he would have fled from with disgust; but, as the events unfolded themselves, he remained as though bound to the spot by a charm, scarce moving, so great was the interest he felt in the fate of the young warrior. Willingly would he have lent him the aid of his counsel, but as yet no chance of his interference being serviceable had offered itself; when at length the ignorance and fanaticism of the people seemed about to accomplish the deliverance of the captive, or at least to save him from immediate sacrifice—a reprieve of which he had already despaired. His favourable impressions had strengthened as the proceedings of the morning drew forth the true character of the unfortunate captive, whose language bespoke a heart imbued with the best passions of man's nature. But when he beheld another being, beautiful as the fabled Peri, but apparently

overwhelmed by misfortune, flee from the pavilion of a monarch whose name was the terror of all Nigrita, to find a refuge in the arms of the victim who, ere sunset, was to have been immolated to the Fetish, a new sympathy was created, and his interest became intensely excited. "What a moment," thought he, watching their every motion, as well as the increasing darkness would allow, "may this be to pour into the heart of one so noble minded the knowledge of the power and goodness of God; to tell him of One who can save, not only in this life, but for ever. I will risk all to place within his reach an immortal happiness."

Meanwhile the splendours of a tropical noon had vanished, and by the suddenness of the change all nature appeared wrapped in the gloom of night. Under cover of the darkness, the Englishman drew towards the open space on which the captives were. When he got clear of the prostrate Dahomans, and could just distinguish the objects of his solicitude, he stooped down, approaching them with an all-but noiseless tread.

Myha, when consciousness returned, and she knew that it was not a dream, but that she was indeed pillowed on Kennee's arm, wept tears of joy. "It was told me," whispered she, "that though you were not

dead, yet we should see each other no more; but I never ceased to pray to God that it might be otherwise—and has He not heard me." Kennee could not answer her: he was too much entranced by gazing on those lovely features, that after so long and dreadful a separation appeared more lovely than before. Parting her loosened tresses, he kissed her forehead again and again, and continued looking into her lustrous eyes until all else was lost in the fast diminishing light.

And thus he remained till the sound of some person approaching broke the spell, for Kennee's practised ear detected the slight noise made by the Englishman, even amid the confusion and uproar; and laying his hand on his dagger prepared to receive the intruder. "Fear not," said the stranger, speaking in the Dahoman language, "I am a white man and a friend." Kennee, though he knew the meaning of these words, could not understand why a white man should style himself a friend of him he came to see sacrificed to the Fetish; thinking, however, that Myha might assist him to unravel the mystery, he repeated the words to her in Arabic.

A momentary feeling of dread at being in close proximity for the first time with one of the white men

almost overpowered her; but she quickly remembered those whom she had been taught to revere. "Perhaps," said she, "he is one of the good white men I have often spoken of; and if so, he may be able to save us."

The Englishman hearing them converse in Arabic repeated, in that language, what he had first said in the Dahoman; and proffered to use any influence he had to serve them. Kennee replied that they were now beyond the aid of man.

"Then," rejoined the stranger, "if you are saved, you must not thank the Fetish, but the Great God who rules all things."

"God is our trust, and He will not desert us," replied Myha, "I am a Christian."

"A Christian!" he exclaimed.

At this moment the heralds announced the approach of the priests. The reply of the Fetish was—that "The king of Allaroonah and the Fellatah maiden were both possessed by evil Fetish, and therefore might not be put to death, for if that were done they would not depart to the land of spirits, to wait upon the ancestors of the king of Dahomy, but remain on earth and torment the living. But, the white men being Fetish,

the Allaroonahan captive must be sold to them to be eaten, as by that means the evil Fetish would become absorbed; and, as the maiden had undergone the humiliation of being gazed upon by so many warriors and slaves, she could not be again permitted to taste the pleasures of the king's palace, but must share the same fate as the other captive."

When the priests had delivered their message, the king rose and demanded from the white man then present whether, if the captives were placed in his hands, he would swear the great oath of his nation that they should be eaten.

"Englishmen," replied he, "never eat their fellow-beings; but if the captives are placed in my power, to dispose of them as I may think fit, I will swear that they shall never again set foot in the Dahoman kingdom." To this, however, the priests would not consent, as the intention of the Fetish would not be carried out.

These deliberations had occupied a considerable time, during which the sun became gradually more obscured, until at length only a small portion of its orb was visible. Upon this the terror of the people became so great as to obliterate their feeling of revenge, and with an unanimous voice they demanded an immediate

compliance to the wish of the Fetish. The king promised, through the priests, that everything should be as they wished; but this did not satisfy them, nor did the darkness diminish; so they called upon him to swear by his own oath, which, if he broke, any of his subjects might demand that his head should be struck off. After this, in order that the evil Fetish, by which the captives were possessed, might be kept in check, the white man was requested to visit them each day.

The multitude now awaited with great anxiety the restoration of day. First, a sombre gloom perceptibly supplanted the darkness, and, by degrees, the shadows again marked the ground, and the animals, ceasing their mournful cries, returned to their accustomed haunts—for not only had wolves and panthers come into the streets, but a lion and lioness had penetrated even into the midst of the assembly, from which, however, they shrunk away as the light grew stronger. These two animals were regarded by the superstitious natives as the evil Fetish attendant on the captives, and to this the title of "Kennee-Voo," borne by the young king, gave some appearance of truth.

The captives had listened with perplexity to the announcement of the priests. Kennee's object in ex-

posing Myha to the gaze of the assembly had been to prevent the possibility of the Dahoman monarch again receiving her into his palace, and their words created only feelings of disappointment. He had hoped that a mutual death would have united them for ever in his fabled regions of departed spirits; this, it seemed, was a boon too great to be extended to them, instead of which they were to be placed in the power of the cruel white men, and, perhaps, separated from each other for ever; for, by his creed, should Myha be compelled to become the wife of another, her spirit would attend upon that of her husband after death. Agitated by these bitter reflections he remained silent, but, as though fearful of some design to deprive him of his treasure, he drew Myha closer to him.

When the sun once more shone in perfect splendour, the king ordered the captives to be removed to separate prisons, and an officer, with a company of soldiers, was approaching to execute the royal command; but Kennee would rather have parted with his life than suffered Myha to be taken from him. "Advance not," he exclaimed, "or you come only for the dead; one prison or one death shall be our lot!"

The officer, afraid to bring again the displeasure of

the Fetish, stood still; nor did the king dare to proceed. In vain did he appeal to the priests, for they could get no answer from the Fetish; and in order to solve the dilemma he agreed to send a messenger to the shades of his ancestors, to learn from them what he should do. Accordingly a young warrior of athletic frame, one renowned for speed, and who could thus perform the journey quickly, was chosen to be the bearer of the king's despatch. He showed no signs of fear, but, on the contrary, seemed proud of the honour conferred upon him; and having learnt by heart the message with which he was to be entrusted, and received a glass of rum to help him on his way, he voluntarily laid his head upon the Miegan's block, and in another instant it rolled at the feet of the king. The songs and fierce gestures of the Amazons testified the pleasure they felt in this horrifying scene, and some even came and performed a Fetish dance round the captives. Myha supposed each moment they were about to seize hold of her. "Oh save me, Kennee, save me from these cruel women," she exclaimed in an excess of fear, and hid her face in his bosom. Often had she regarded with compassion the daughters of Allaroonah, sunk in idolatory and sloth, but they were as angels compared

with the Amazons of Dahomy, whose inhumanity made her shudder at the very mention of the name of a female warrior.

Gradually the tumult subsided, and all returned to their places and listened in silence to the monotonous voice of one who was chanting some exaggerated accounts of the war. This was continued until the chief priest rose and said he had just received the answer of his majesty's ancestors, who willed that the captives must be confined in the same hut, and bound with chains which were not to be struck off until they were placed in the hands of the white man; great watchfulness was also enjoined, lest they should quit the world by other means than that pointed out by the Fetish; for, should this be so, the anger of his majesty's ancestors would be raised against the people of Abomey.

Myha had heard the former announcement of their reprieve from death with a silent joy; but when the decision as to their future fate was made fully known, she clasped her arms round Kennee's neck, and looking up into his face watched every change as it passed over that noble countenance, marking how despair gave place to joy when he heard they were to be

removed together from the tyrant's power. But in this joy she had likewise a share, for she was to be with him, and by her words, and through the help of the white man—the good white man—Kennee might be brought to know God; and if so, how sweet would be her captivity.

On the following morning early, the Englishman applied for permission to visit the captives. This was granted; and accompanied by the Mayo—the prime minister—he repaired to the prison. It was merely a hut surrounded by a lofty wall, built of mud, the top of the wall being profusely decorated with human skulls. Shuddering at the sight, the Englishman quickened his steps and entered the enclosure.

Judging by what he already knew of the African's temperament, he expected to find the two captives either deprived of all spirit at the prospect of slavery, or, maddened by their wrongs, to have thoughts only for revenge. Great was his surprise, however, as he cautiously approached the unoccupied door-way, to see the young warrior reclining on the ground, from which he had raised himself a little by his right arm, supporting in his hand the chain that encumbered his companion's wrist; whilst she, the lovely Fellatah

maiden, was seated at his side reading aloud from a few torn leaves, and to which he seemed to be listening attentively: for his gaze, fixed upon her countenance, wandered not, except to follow the reader's eyes across the page, from which she occasionally raised them with a look so full of sweet persuasion that, let the appeal be made for what it might, few could have resisted its influence.

The white man kept back those who were accompanying him for a few moments, whilst he feasted his eyes upon so interesting a picture. What incomparable happiness was there: the young warrior once more in possession of the dearest object of his life, and, in some degree, still her guardian, listened, as in days gone by, to the silvery tone of her low, sweet voice; and she, knowing how he gave ear to her every word, was reading to him and telling him of God. Willing, however, as was the instructor, her scholar asked more questions than she could answer; for Myha's was a belief of the heart, a belief without an abstruse knowledge, and so not the one ready to answer the arguments of an idolatry such as that to which Kennee still clung. Nor was she ashamed to acknowledge her ignorance, which, to her, was better than the deep learning that, through its very

richness, has carried many a noble but self-sufficient mind beyond Christianity into infidel philosophy. But she had an able ally at hand; one who would instruct her in all things she so ardently desired to know.

CHAPTER XII.

"E'en mighty monarchs oft are meanly born,
And kings by birth to lowest rank return;
All subject to the power of giddy chance,
For fortune can depress, or can advance:
But true nobility is of the mind,
Not given by chance, and not to chance resign'd.

DRYDEN.

THE captives were not alone, for, seated on a low stool, was a Dahoman warrior, armed with almost every description of weapon. Not a muscle of this man's face moved, nor did he betray any other sign of life, but silent and motionless as a statue he remained, with his eyes fixed upon his charge. When the Englishman entered the hut the captives immediately recognised in him their mysterious friend, and Myha, in the excess of her joy, would have thrown herself at his feet, having first greeted him as their deliverer, had not he prevented her, saying it was not him they must thank, but God. Kennec, not yet fully convinced of the sincerity of the white man's profession of friendship, received him less

cordially; nor, after the first greeting, did he again address him. The few observations that passed were in Arabic, as the Englishman knew the Dahoman minister was ignorant of that language, though at the same time he pretended to be greatly interested in all that was said. He informed the captives that he had obtained permission from the king of Dahomy to visit them as often as he wished, and that he should do so again on the following morning.

Before taking his leave he placed in Myha's hand a book, remarking that he thought it would go further to prove his desire to serve them than anything he could say. Myha received the gift in silence, not knowing what it might be, nor, until they were left alone with their motionless guard, did she proceed to examine the white man's present. The book was printed in Arabic characters, and the title-page told her that it was "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." She read no more, but eagerly grasping the precious gift, and looking up to Kennee, she essayed to speak, but could not for joy, though tears imbued her lovely eyes. He, however, supposing her to be under the influence of some powerful spell, worked by the white man's Fetish, snatched the book from her hands, and

was about to tear it to pieces, when terror brought words to Myha's lips. "Stay, Kennee," she exclaimed, "it is a Bible—it is that book I have so long wished to possess, and with it how contentedly shall we remain in prison, for we can now read it together, and the white man will explain all to us, and we shall not repine at our changed lot, for our happiness will be greater than when we were free."

Kennee smiled as he placed the book again in her lap, for his heart was glad to see once more a look as jovous as that which greeted him upon his return from Abomey, after they had felt, for the first time, the pain of separation. "I would not exchange this prison, and these chains," said he, "for Allaroonah and liberty, unless my Myha was there to grace my palace. And if I can believe and say truly, 'God is greater than the Fetish,' I will."

At sun-rise each day the Englishman was admitted into the prison hut; and at each visit became more deeply interested in the welfare of the captives. The maiden, he found, was already one of his Master's fold, and needed his kind offices only to encourage her to bear up against trials to come. With her companion, however, it was quite different; he was as one who,

having heard a vague report of the riches and greatness of a foreign nation, finds a voyager who not only tells him of the truth of what he has heard, but instructs him how he may become one of the happy people; and though reason and self-interest prompt him to believe, prejudice prevents him.

He reasoned on the visibility of the Fetish, and proved their power by what they had done in rescuing him from his enemies. But he was told that it was not the Fetish that had hidden the sun when he was about to be put to death; for that millions who never heard the name of Fetish saw the same thing, and nations far removed were similarly visited with darkness; and, therefore, so many would not be made to suffer for the good of one. In support of this he showed him an almanac, written in Arabic, in which the eclipse was foretold, together with the day and time of its happening. And that though it was only a natural occurrence, it was, through providence, the means of saving his life.

Myha listened in silent reverence to the white man's discourse. She had been unable to answer Kennee when he deduced from the circumstance just mentioned the power and divinity of his Fetish, and so was now the more glad to have the question solved.

During the first period of their imprisonment Myha's greatest dread was lest the Dahoman monarch should disregard his oath, and remove her again to his palace; but her fears, on this account, gradually subsided as day after day passed, and she remained unmolested, for no one had visited them except the Mayo, who, being answerable for their safety, came two or three times each day; nor had they as yet been outside the court of their prison.

One morning when the Englishman called he found Myha weeping. Both captives eagerly rose upon his entrance, and greeted him with an earnestness that struck him at once as being the harbinger of some change about to take place. To the maiden he had become as a second father; to him were disclosed her inmost thoughts, her doubts, and fears; and the young warrior, having put aside his reserve, gave him his entire confidence, and took great delight in discoursing of the governments, laws, and manner of warfare of the white men. Myha took his hands in her own, and covered them with kisses, whilst her tears flowed faster than before. "Oh what happiness to be able to say one more farewell," said she, "for this is the last time we shall meet on earth; and never, never more

shall I listen to the voice that has confirmed to me a joy and comfort which it is beyond the power of the tyrant to take away.

"If it be the will of God that we part thus suddenly, let us submit with cheerfulness," replied he, "and though the chance seems small; yet it is possible we may meet again in some portion of that empire throughout the vast extent of which the name of slavery is abhorred, for it were better to be the meanest subject of Queen Victoria than here, in this land of blood, to reign as monarch. But whither are they about to remove you?"

"It is not we who are to be removed," replied Kennee, "the Dahoman has yet some treacherous deed to work out, for this morning the Mayo said that the king being tired of the presence of the white man, had issued an order that he was not to visit the captives any more, but leave Abomey immediately; but, perhaps, the Mayo spoke not the truth." The entrance, at this moment, of the prime minister, who came with a guard of soldiers to conduct the Englishman from Abomey, dispelled their last hope, and they now perceived that the moment of separation was come. The Englishman's parting words were intended to strengthen them

in the belief of God's goodness, and to encourage them to look to the future with hope,—"For," said he, "though the morning of your days which opened with such brilliant promise has been so early overcast, yet may the storms disappear ere mid-day; but meanwhile your courage," continued he, addressing Kennee, "will avail nothing towards rescuing her you love from the power of the stranger; the nobleness of your heart, however, can do much to soften her slavery." The pleasure he had experienced had banished from the mind of the Englishman all thoughts of a speedy separation; but now that it had actually taken place, he felt that they were indeed in a position from which it seemed that no power of man could rescue them, left as they were at the mercy of the Dahoman monarch, who when he had satiated his revenge would, if they survived the trial, hand them over to some white slave-trader. The horrors they were destined to witness before arriving at the plantations, and the indignities they would have to suffer there, came vividly into his mind. He saw, in imagination, the noble-minded captive, as he had often seen many poor wretches in reality, toiling beneath the curse and lash of a human fiend, and lowered to the level of the beasts of the

field; whilst for the maiden he pictured a still more terrible future. Her beauty would soon attract the notice of her purchaser, who would consider himself her absolute lord and master, and, in such a case, how little would her moral worth avail to save her, when virtue in a slave is punished by her owner as a crime. Thus, soon, in calm reflection, was the hope he once entertained dispelled, and, as there appeared to be no earthly happiness in store for them, he prayed God they might not lose the better reward.

It was the presence of the white man that had thus far preserved the captives from experiencing the revenge of the monarch; now, however, when he was relieved from this restraint, he no longer hesitated to put in practice his long-meditated designs, but ordered them forthwith to be brought before him. Kennee heard the summons unmoved, for to him it was a pleasure to show the tyrant how little power he had over the heart of a brave man. But though he felt no dread on his own account, yet the terror shown by his companion distressed him. Myha's was a fear beyond the power of words to sooth. "Perhaps," said she, "they are about to separate us."

"That they may do when we are beyond their further

vengeance, not before." Kennee spoke these words with the greater confidence, because, in spite of the watchful eye of their guard, he had possessed himself of that which would render any such attempt abortive.

As they were taken through the streets of Abomey, guarded by a company of Amazons, the whole population came out to gaze upon them, and so great was the press that heralds had to go before them, warning the people not to touch the prisoners on account of their being Fetish. The young chief might have been treading the streets of Allaroonah, conducting her he loved, as he had often done, from his father's court to the peaceful Fellatah village, for a smile as of joy was on his countenance, whilst his every thought was for her, and her alone. But Myha knew that every eye was upon her, and felt the novelty of her situation in being thus exposed for a public spectacle; when she ventured, however, for a moment to raise her eyes from the ground and saw the smile on Kennee's countenance she became more collected.

The golden ornaments that a few years before had been placed on her wrists and ancles, as tokens of her betrothal, were still there, and these, together with the rich garments she had worn whilst in the king's

palace, which had not been taken from her, contrasted strongly with the scanty piece of cotton cloth that hung from her companion's waist. When they entered the royal presence a warrior was chanting forth the never-dying song of the victories of the Dahomans in the valley of Allaroonah; the achievements of his countrymen he likened to a shower of rain beating down the clouds of gnats that hung over the marshes on a sultry evening.

When this extemporary effusion of words was ended the king commanded the Miegan to bring in the heads of the most illustrious of the Allaroonahans who had been sent to wait upon his ancestors. Departing he presently returned with some Fetishmen who carried large calabashes filled with human heads which had been preserved in some manner, and afterwards dried in the sun, so as to cause them to retain the different expressions each wore when alive. Myha, taken by surprise, looked upon their ghastly burden, but quickly turned away her face; whilst Kennee, more familiar with Dahoman cruelties, continued gazing as though the sight had fascinated him. Many of the countenances were familiar, some had been his most intimate friends, and one he had regarded with the affection of a

brother; this was a young chief about his own age, his almost constant companion in the chase and in the war. "Sad, indeed," thought he, "has been the fate of one so generous and so truly brave."

An Amazon, whom Myha had observed to scowl upon her with a look of dire import, stood up, and having obtained permission to speak, said, "Why should this slave girl, this lover of the gaze of men, be a burden to the king? If the king will lend her to me I will teach her the war dance, and the use of the spear and the club." "If this Allaroonah slave," rejoined another, "who presumed to resist the just demands of the most powerful of monarchs, may not be sacrificed, why should he not be made to work like any other slave."

"Let the Fetish be asked," replied his majesty, "and we will abide by the decision."

The priests retired to their Fetish-house, and in a short time returned with this answer, "The life of every person is in the king's hands, he may do what he will with his slaves. The Fetish say, the chains of the captives must not be taken off, and if they die, except they were eaten by white men, the safety, not only of Dahomy, but of the whole world would be endangered."

The tyrant's brow became contracted when he heard

the words of the priests; he had hoped for a favourable answer, in order that he might at once commence his intended revenge, by first degrading the captives to the real position of slaves; but as he dared not act against the will of the Fetish, lest he should awaken the fears of the people, he contented himself with upbraiding them, charging the young warrior with cowardice, the maiden with shamelessness in exposing her face, after she became the king's slave, to the gaze of every man. He had enjoyed her terror upon hearing the words of the Amazon; but the sweet smile with which she looked into her companion's face, when the decision of the priests was announced, cut him to the heart, and he dismissed the captives meditating how he could be revenged upon them without breaking his oath.

On the following morning the Mayo came to the prison, attended by a company of Amazons, to conduct the captives again into the presence of the king; but before doing so, the rich garments Myha had hitherto retained were replaced by the garb usually worn by Dahoman slaves. To compensate in some degree for the scantiness of this mere apology for dress, she loosened the folds of her hair, so that it fell like a glossy mantle in rich profusion over her shoulders. As

they were conducted through the streets to the place of assembly, Kennee's features assumed the look of one who has resolved to commit some desperate deed. As for Myha, she hid her face in her hands, and wept chaste but bitter tears of shame.

The king, having received the usual adulation of his subjects, commanded the Miegan to strike the golden rings from off the wrists and ancles of the maiden, remarking that they were unsuited for slaves, much less for one who, having debased herself below the meanest slave, was not worthy the name of woman. The brow of the young warrior darkened and his lips became compressed as the tyrant exulted over the degradation of her who, ennobled by a virtue as powerful as it was rare among Africa's daughters, had scorned his proffered favours. The minstrels had chanted their flatteries, the drums been beaten, and the muskets fired, and everything told of the absolute power of the mónarch, when suddenly the captive warrior extended his shackled hand towards the sun, which had not performed half its course to the zenith, and said with a loud voice: "Listen, ye Dahomans! If your king break his oath he will endanger your safety as well as his own; the sun will not rise again upon Abomey if

we be in it. The vengeance might have fallen even now, but that which is at hand is only a warning. Remember, you have already witnessed the power of the Great Spirit; who can tell how soon that power will be used with fatal effect?"

Kennee, with the practised eye of a hunter, had noticed the indications of the approach of one of those tornados which burst so unawares on the inhabitants of Western Africa, and long before any one present had noticed its proximity, all being so deeply interested in the proceedings, the heavily charged cloud was about to burst over the assembly. The Miegan, at the command of the king, struck the captive a blow with his club, when, as though to punish the act, a gust of wind, carrying with it a cloud of sand, swept over the assembled people. The hurricane was so sudden that all the banners and umbrellas were borne into the air, and scattered far and wide; the sun became obscured, and torrents of rain deluged the ground; the whole scene being rendered more awful by loud peals of thunder that echoed from one side of heaven to the other. Fear soon calmed every other passion; for, to the war of the elements was added, by the superstitious Dahomans, a dread of some supernatural occurrence.

Kennee alone, of all the vast multitude, remained unmoved by the terrors of disruptured nature; and, standing erect, it seemed as though he, who was apparently nothing more than a shackled captive, was directing, with outstretched arm, the course and violence of the storm. As for Myha, she knelt and in silent supplication addressed Him who alone could give them aid. The hurricane lasted but a short time, passing away as suddenly as it arose, and leaving nature to her accustomed quiet.

This incident thoroughly roused the fears of the king, which had gradually subsided; for, since the darkening of the sun, no further demonstration of the displeasure of Fetish had been shown, but now there needed not the clamours of the people to urge on the departure of the captives.

A Portuguese slave dealer had accepted them a present from his majesty, with the stipulation that they were to be eaten by the white men; but being considered as belonging to the class of slaves termed by the dealers "knowing ones," who were of less value than the ignorant, he cared little about them, and they had been allowed to remain thus long unclaimed. Now, however, it was resolved to send

them at once to the sea coast, under a special guard of soldiers.

Accordingly, very early on the following morning, they commenced their march, and when the sun rose the white walls of Abomey were left far behind them. The distance they were compelled to travel each day was equal to about twenty English miles. To Kennee, personally, this was as nothing, as he had often accomplished twice the distance with ease for many successive days; but to Myha the punishment was greater than she could endure. Throughout the whole day Kennee had lent her his support; at first she rested lightly on him, but as her fatigue became greater so did his precious burden become heavier. Scorched by the sun's rays, from being unprotected by her accustomed clothing, and with feet and ancles torn by the rough stones and bushes, she arrived at the first night's halting place.

Her spirits, that had been so long the great stay of Kennee's hope, and which alone seemed able to support her beneath her great degradation, had fled; and as Kennee watched by her side, as she lay on the floor of the hut in which they were to pass the night, she looked up, and though her heart was overwhelmed with sorrow a sweet smile played on her countenance.

"Kennee," said she, "my strength is not sufficient to endure much longer; but may I have the assurance that when it pleases God to remove me we shall meet again in heaven?" "Oh, my Myha," replied he, "do not speak thus—we cannot, we must not part."

Myha took his hand saying, "I should not only be willing but happy to die if I knew that our separation would be only for a few short years."

Kennee kissed her forehead, and with a half promising look that met her inquiring gaze, replied, "Give me but a short time longer, and if I can say that your God is mine, I will."

And thus he once more lured her on to live for his sake alone, for he said, "If I can hardly attain to this knowledge with such a guide, how shall I be able to do so without?"

Day after day passed, and each one rendered less distinct the far distant range of mountains, beneath whose summits had once nestled their happy, peaceful home, and which now hung on the northern horizon like a line of purple tinted clouds. Finally they disappeared, and with them vanished every former joy. Allaroonah, to her captive children, was no more.

Still they continued journeying onward until the even-

ing of the eighteenth day, when upon arriving at a muddy creek they were placed in a canoe procured from a village hard by. The canoe was paddled by a couple of Kroomen, who propelled it at a great speed, which they kept up after leaving the open water, and entering a narrow channel concealed from view by the overhanging bushes, whose luxuriant growth immediately converted the twilight into a darkness that would have rendered further progress quite impossible except to native boatmen.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Degenerate trade! thy minions could despise
The heart-born anguish of a thousand cries;
Could mock the groans of fellow-men; and bear
The curse of kingdoms peopled with despair;
Could stamp disgrace on man's polluted name,
And barter, with their gold, eternal shame."

CAMPBELL.

THE barracoon, as the place for the reception of slaves previous to their shipment is termed, is always built in some spot convenient for embarking them, and at the same time affording protection from the vigilance of British cruisers. The one in which Kennee and Myha were confined was erected on a piece of ground intersected by narrow channels, forming a complete labyrinth, the threading of which to strangers would be a difficult and harassing undertaking. These channels had communications with the sea as well as the interior of the country.

The line of coast for many miles on either hand was an unvarying ledge of mud, from which grew a dense thicket of low mangrove bushes, whose stems each

flood of the tide, covered with water, whilst their decaying leaves poisoned the air with pestiferous exhalations. This monotony of outline was unbroken by bay or river, a feature that added greatly to the security of the position, which was so well chosen, that ships belonging to the British squadron of blockade had often anchored within cannon range of it without being aware, that separated only by a few bushes lay more than a thousand slaves, in whose hearts the boom of their signal guns or the report of a musket had frequently raised hopes of freedom not destined to be realized; for the knowledge that one race of white men are constantly endeavouring to rescue them from their captors seems to be a fact well known to the slaves even before they arrive at the sea coast. At this part, however, there was nothing to indicate to the sons of freedom the existence of a barracoon; no signal post, no fort, nor even a look-out hut. Its only guardians were fevers; and the stillness of death reigned around, a stillness broken only by the crack of a gangsman's whip, or the cry of some poor tortured being. Worthy, indeed, of the spot was the traffic which it fostered; beginning in rapine, carried on in cruelty, and ending in death or a life-long misery to its victims.

The two captives were chained to one of the posts with which the interior of the shed was filled, and threatened with the lash if they uttered a word. Wearied by their long journey they eagerly sought repose; Kennee seated on the floor with his back to the post, and Myha with her head pillowed on his arm. What a situation was this for two beings whose hearts were keenly sensitive to the degradation of their position! "How dreadful it is to be a captive to the cruel white men," whispered Myha. Kennee spoke not, but pressed the hand he held in his, when the maiden, assured of his watchfulness, felt safe, and slept, dreaming of Allaroonah and her native village nestled in peace amid its lovely glades.

Kennee endeavoured to repress his inclination to sleep, and for some time succeeded in doing so by conjectures as to the future of himself and his companion. In these reflections he found no cheering ray; and when he recalled his thoughts from the future, and heard the sighs and groans of a great multitude with whom he was surrounded, he trembled at the idea that the light of heaven, so welcome to the free, would only add to their misery by revealing that of others. As yet all had been hidden in darkness, and nothing in

such a place reminded him of the happy world in which he had lived, save a star twinkling through an aperture in the palm-thatched roof. Bending over his sleeping Myha he listened to her placid breathing that told of a sweet, unbroken slumber. Gradually a sympathy stole over him, and he too became unconscious of the present. His dreams, however, unlike Myha's, were not those of one who is in charity with his fellow-men, but led him in fancy to scenes of strife and bloodshed; he was once more at the head of his warriors, not defending Allaroonah against its enemies, but marching to attack the palace of his enemy; victory is with his countrymen, they scale the walls of Abomey, the Amazons fly, Myha is rescued, the Dahoman monarch is in the power of the conqueror, and with a cry of triumph he bounds forth to seize the prize, when a shower of lashes from the heavy whip of one of the drivers restored him to consciousness. These gangsmen are generally taken from among the slaves themselves, and are always chosen for their fierce natures; as such alone are fit to exercise the cruelties practiced by the dealers. Kennee's spirit was roused by the conduct of this fellow, for in the dull light of the early morning he perceived that the lash had fallen on Myha's

shoulders as well as his own, and forgetful of the impotence of his rage, he started to his feet with a look that made the wretch recoil before him. His arm, however, soon fell again, for the manacles he wore reminded him that the lion was chained. The gangsman's feeling of awe was only momentary, and he was about to inflict a further chastisement, when Myha interposed, and though her language was unintelligible to him, he nevertheless turned away and vented his wrath on some of the other captives. And thus it was that she could now repay Kennee's devotedness to herself, and become his preserver, by shielding him from many indignities his nobleness of mind would otherwise have brought upon him.

They were by this time enabled to see their fellow-captives, and also the extent of their prison-house; and if the spirits of both sank within them at the sight, it must be attributed to another cause than a selfish fear. Kennee looked on in silence, and, with lips compressed, his eyes followed each brutish keeper as he went his rounds, seeming to writhe when the lash fell, as though himself as well as the poor wretch had received its force: for the heart of the bravest warrior may be equally susceptible of human misery, when presented

under such a form, as could the tenderest maiden's. As for Myha, she wept tears of compassion, and offered to heaven a silent prayer for them; and thus, whilst commisserating the misfortunes of. others, she forgot her own.

But, in the midst of this amount of human misery, she singled out, as the day wore on, one individual who appeared to be in the very depth of distress; this was a young and slightly formed negress who was chained to a stake near a coarse fellow who, by his unruliness, drew down upon himself and the innocent captive at his side, almost continuous chastisement. Nor was this during the day only, for when in the darkness she was compelled, by fear, to cry out, she was sure to bring the gangsman's whip on herself, as well as all who were in that part of the barracoon; but when daylight came it was found that her spirit had fled to Him who gave it. It was in being the witness of such scenes as this that Myha learned how comparatively happy was her own lot.

In a few days such atrocities as these became familiar, and the young warrior could not help a feeling of pity for his fellow-captives—for he was too generous to entertain a harsher sentiment towards them—stealing over

him, when he saw the abject manner in which so vast a number received so cruel a treatment at the hands of their few enslavers. In his own country he had observed how even the meanest slave would sometimes turn upon his tormentor; here, however, all seemed to be in a state of the utmost apathy: a feeling caused, perhaps, by their forlorn situation, rather than natural to them.

Many days had passed since their arrival at the barracoon, each the exact type of that which preceded it, when one evening a little before sunset all the captives were driven into the open air, and such as were able to walk were chained together in couples only, and not in gangs, as upon the celerity of their movements much would depend. They were then divided into companies, over each of which was placed a driver, and the whole body, about six hundred in number, were set in motion and urged on by the vigorous application of whips into a smart pace. Their course for a short distance at first was inland, to avoid the swamps, and then altering the route they were kept as near the sea as the nature of the ground would allow. The march was kept up without a moment's cessation, until past midnight, when many having fallen behind,

in spite of the exertions of the drivers, the main body came to a halt.

Presently the scouts who had been sent on returned with some information that caused the march to be resumed, but in a different direction, and after leaving the coast some distance an order was given that all should lie down where they were till daylight. Never was a command to bivouac more welcome to the ears of a weary soldier than was that now given to those poor wretches. The distance they had traversed was about twelve English miles; but this gives no idea of the exertion necessary for its accomplishment, as the country was covered with prickles and tangled bushes, matted together with creepers and with long rank grass.

Happy was it for Myha that she and Kennee were linked together, for had it not been so she must have perished during that dreadful night. He had concluded, from the preparations he saw going forward, that a march was intended, and had endeavoured to prepare Myha for it by binding up her feet in strips of cloth torn from his scanty clothing. When this protection became useless, which it soon did, Kennee bore her in his arms over the roughest part of the ground, and

supported her when it was less difficult; and through these means she was amongst those who now enjoyed the luxury of rest. Most of the captives had no sooner ceased to move than they threw themselves on the ground, and, almost instantly, sleep overpowered every other sensation. Not thus, however, was it with Myha—her pain and fatigue were too great to be so soon subdued. Kennee plucked some grass, wet with dew, and sprinkling her face with the cooling shower refreshed her parched lips; and as he pillowed her on his arm he felt the tear drops falling fast; but as he knew the deep source from whence her griefs sprang, he attempted not to restrain them: gradually her sobs ceased, and she rested in peace.

Morning dawned, but brought no comfort to the wretched captives. Messengers were despatched at day-break to stay the advance of those who had lagged on the march of the previous night; and the sun was not long risen when the foremost band were retracing their weary steps to the place from whence they set out, and to which they arrived towards nightfall, haggared and in despair. Some of the more feeble perished in the bush; and the number of these would have been greatly increased had not the strongest

amongst the captives been compelled to bear along those who were unable to proceed.

The cause that led to this sudden and rapid movement, and the reason of its equally sudden abandonment, are soon explained. About sunset a signal had been made to the people at the barracoon by the look-out boats stationed several miles at sea, to the effect that a ship ready to take in a cargo of six hundred slaves would make a certain cape, about twenty English miles distant, at midnight. This was an opportunity which must on no account be lost, and the captives, as we have seen, were at once driven off. A British cruiser, however, whose boats had been some time on her track, gave chase that very evening and captured her.

This was not the first occasion upon which some of the slaves had been thus harassed. A short time before the arrival of Kennee and Myha, about a hundred of the strongest were driven a distance of thirty English miles between sun-rise and sun-set; and were upon the rafts in the act of being towed to a ship, when a man-of-war's boat dashed round a head-land; and though its crew succeeded in preventing the shipment, they did not capture the slaver.

Day after day were additional captives brought in,

until their number more than supplied the places of those who died either by disease or famine; for in consequence of the prolonged detention of the slaves, provisions at the barracoon had run short, and to this additional torment many gave way who had borne up against every other privation. For several successive days, dense fogs, designated "smokes" by the sailors, had hung over the whole line of sea coast, hiding all objects beyond the distance of a stone's throw; nor was there a breath of wind to give a token of life to the drooping shrubs—nature itself feeling the effects of the baneful atmosphere. One morning the captives were roused from their lethargy by an unusual activity amongst the gangsmen; and from this movement anticipated another forced march. This, however, was not the cause—a slaver, aided by the fog, had been towed by boats to within a short distance of the outlet of a canal that communicated with the barracoon, and which was instantly, as if by magic, swarming with canoes, each manned by a Krooman.

These canoes were brought alongside the small open space near the barracoon; and as each one came up two captives were placed in it, when immediately it shot away, propelled by the skilful Krooman, gliding

swiftly but surely through the intricate windings of the narrow passage, proving that this was by no means the first time the boatmen had engaged in such a scene. The poor wretches were taken out of the barracoon in gangs, and all was done without noise or confusion—not a word being spoken. Gradually the place became more empty until at last only one gang remained, and amongst these were Kennee and Myha, but they too were unchained from the posts, and upon arriving at the side of the canoes the chains were struck from their ancles, but the manacles remained on.

Myha had watched the whole proceeding in a state of the greatest fear, and when they came to remove the chain that bound her to Kennee her anguish was complete. But as the gangs were sent off, and no one cast a look upon her as she clung to her companion's arm, her heart beat more freely. At last only one negress was left, she was placed in a canoe, and the two captives were about to step in, when one of the drivers pulled them back motioning Myha to get in alone, but instead of doing so she only clung the firmer to her companion. "Oh, Kennee, save me," she exclaimed, looking up in an agony of despair, "do not let them separate us." She had forgotten his present

condition, in remembrance of what he had once been. Her words were bitterness to him, knowing how helpless he was, but he cast a look of defiance at the ruffian, and drew his lovely burden firmer to him. A lash across Myha's shoulders was the only answer vouchsafed, and some of those who stood near seized Kennee and threw him on the ground, whilst others bore the bleeding girl to the canoe, which in the next instant was hidden from sight by the mist, and the long pendant boughs of the overhanging shrubs, whose blossoms fell upon it in a fragrant shower as though it carried a bridal party.

This scene had only occupied a very few moments of time, but in the compass of them and of those that immediately followed, how great was the sum of human misery—of grief more poignant than that which chequers the lives of many who live to the utmost span of man's existence.

It was now debated whether or not they should throw the remaining captive into the water, when an empty canoe came up, and into that he was placed. Liberty itself would not have been half so great a boon as was the permission now granted him of going into slavery with her who was dearer to him than that

inestimable prize. He could, had he chosen, easily have overpowered the Krooman who was paddling him, but this he had no wish to do, and before long, the hollow roar of the surf, as it broke on a short line of pebbly shore at some distance, told of their approach to the ocean; but still the fog hid everything, except a small extent of water, and Kennee looked in vain for the great canoe of the white men. Presently, however, the noise of angry voices, mingled with the rumbling of chains and creaking of cables was heard, and the slave ship loomed through the fog.

Kennee had neither time or inclination to admire her graceful shape and springing masts, for the moment the canoe touched her side a rope was let down, and the noose being fixed underneath his arms he was drawn up and sent at once to the hold, or slave deck, where he was thrust into one of the shelves nearest the hatchway. So quick had all this been accomplished, that he scarce knew where he was until he found himself lying on a board with another captive on one side of him and a partition on the other, with only sufficient spare room to turn himself round in, though this was not what everyone had, whilst the height would not allow of his sitting upright. In the hurry

attendant upon getting the ship off, they had omitted to lock Kennee in his place, and the hatches had not been long closed before he scrambled from his shelf, and as the gloom was just penetrable, a little light being admitted through a few open ports, he commenced a search, down the central passage, for his lost Myha, one half of the main slave deek being appropriated to the females; in some slavers this would have been divided from the rest of the space, but it was not so in the L'Allegro. Had not love impelled him, success would have seemed hopeless, for how could he otherwise expect to find the object of his quest in such a place and among such a number; for several hundreds of human beings were there stowed away.

Long, but vain, was his search; and returning to his own end of the passage, he sat musing as to what he should do to make his presence known to Myha, when he heard his own name whispered by one near him; he listened with intense eagerness, and perceived that the murmurings proceeded from the shelf corresponding with his own on the opposite side of the hold. Drawing near he found that it was Myha, for she was praying to her God for him. Although anxious to ap-

prise her that he was near, he could not refrain from drinking in her words, proving, as they did, her trust in her God and her love for himself. "Myha," said he, when she became silent, "I am with you, I am safe."

In the joy of the moment she forgot where she was, nor remembered her chains. Then, indeed, the iron entered into her soul, and bursting into a flood of tears she exclaimed, "Oh, Kennee, I cannot come to you, but let me feel that you are really here," and stretching forth her hand, he grasped it, covering it with kisses.

CHAPTER XIV.

"They were gallant barks,
As ever through the raging billows rode;
And many a tempest's buffeting they bore.
Their sails all swelling with the eastern breeze,
Their tighten'd cordage clattering to the mast,
Steady they rode the main; the gale aloft
Sung in the shrouds, the sparkling water hiss'd
Before, and froth'd, and whiten'd far behind."

SOUTHEY.

WHILST the scene just related was passing down below, all had been activity outside. The shipment of the slaves, which commenced about noon, was completed ere the sun had half reached the horizon; for, having no surf to contend with, the Kroomen performed their work quicker than they would had the slaves been put upon rafts, which is often done, as there was no delay at the ship's side, nor any crowding or confusion on her decks. As soon as each canoe had arrived, its living freight was hauled up and at once stowed away as mechanically as any inanimate merchandise. When the whole cargo was taken on board

the hatches were battened down, and the cables being cut to save time, the sweeps were manned, and with these, assisted by two large whale-boats towing, the vessel moved slowly through the water.

The object of the captain was to gain an offing, expecting before dark to get clear of the banks of fog which he supposed would not extend far out to sea. The ship made little head-way however, and got into the strong current which sets in from the north-west towards the Bights of Benin. With what anxiety did they await the springing up of the easterly wind, upon which the crew knew that the safety of the ship depended. But their knowledge of the peculiarities of the climate availed them nothing, for not a breath of air agitated the mist, or flapped the loosely hanging sails as they were swayed to and fro by the gentle rolling of the ship.

The crew of the slaver numbered eighteen men; and was composed of the subjects of several powers. The captain was a Brazilian Portuguese, a man with some pretensions to a gentleman both in outward appearance and address, and one who had evidently been in a more respectable station of life; but this increased the chances of his success, as he had sometimes passed

for what he pretended to be—a fair trader—as we shall presently see. The pilot, his next in command, was a Brazilian born, and a man after the captain's own heart. The cook, whose office is of no small importance on board a slaver, was a native of South Carolina. The seamen were mostly Spaniards or Portuguese, with the exception of two Africans and one Englishman. Never was a ship manned by a more complete set of villains than were the crew of the beautiful brig "L'Allegro," for so was she called, nor did her name seem misapplied judging from her outward appearance. But it was a cruel mockery; for beneath her tapering masts, and within her graceful form lay concealed worse horrors than Dante has conceived as the fate of condemned spirits.

She was what sailors would term "clipper built," and had made two successful trips between Africa and the Brazils previous to her present voyage. The first time she appeared off the African coast, her rigging was purposely kept in a very disorderly state, and she had false bows and stern in order to look more like a slow sailing trader. Getting entangled among the British cruisers, the captain, who spoke English as fluently as a native ran her alongside one of them, and represented

himself as a Liverpool trader collecting palm oil. Passing for what he seemed, he ran his ship up one of the creeks, from which she issued in less than a week as taunt a craft as ever gladdened a sailor's eyes, and having on board about six hundred slaves. On her second trip she shipped four hundred, making with her present cargo seventeen hundred slaves shipped within twelve months. The profit realized by the two first voyages amounted to about £30,000.

At nightfall the whale boats were dismissed, and to prevent the ship drifting too far to the south-east, an anchor was thrown out. The captain remained on deck during the whole night, watching eagerly for the first indications of the expected breeze; or hoping by his impatience to hasten the dawn of day; but the gloom that succeeded the pitchy darkness only showed the mist still hanging its heavy curtain on the waters. At length a gentle wind came curling its way through the fog, indicating the near approach of the storm, than which, to the slaver's crew, no zepher was ever more welcome to the heated shepherds. The ship's decks and rigging became instantly one scene of life and activity; but as each man knew his duty, all was done in order and silence. Not many minutes had elapsed

from their feeling the first puff, before a succession of gusts came sweeping long lanes in the dense fog, which was licked up before it as though by a flame; and then the whole disappeared, the sky becoming almost instantaneously clear. These phenomena had been regarded with an intense anxiety by the crew—filling their hearts with a savage joy; but the moment that effected their deliverance revealed a sight that made each man turn pale. They espied to the north-west, and distant about seven or eight English miles, a ship of war. Every glass was immediately brought to bear upon the unwelcome apparition, which was soon made out to be a British ten-gun brig.

From the stir on board her it was quite evident to the slaver's captain that he was suspected, and if so, his only chance of escape lay in the superior sailing qualities of his ship. His first care was to harangue his men, pointing out the contrasts between the rewards they would obtain by carrying the ship safe to port, and the penalty of allowing themselves to be captured and landed on the swampy coast, which was just visible on the horizon, where many would fall victims to fever or perish through hunger. He ordered every man to his post, and having displayed the national

flag of the United States, he set every sail to woo the increasing breeze, which coming in squalls caused the "L'Allegro" to plunge in the already ruffled water. These squalls became more frequent until they merged into the regular sweep of a steady gale, before which the ship drove at a fearful speed.

How tantalizing it must have been to those on board the man-of-war to see the chase thus careering before the wind, whilst their own sails were still hanging heavily on the yards, nor was it till the distance between the two ships had been considerably widened that she received the first rough embrace of the storm. For some time the "L'Allegro" was kept before the wind in order to obtain a better offing, but still she was in a bad position, having to cross the enemy's course, before she could get into the ocean, and as the speed of both appeared to be about equal, it was a mere trial of seamanship between the Brazilian and the Englishman. The slave captain tried every artifice his ingenuity or experience could devise, and succeeded in no small degree in baffling his enemy. But still, in spite of all his manœuvres, the cruiser was gaining slowly but steadily upon him, showing that it was no common enemy he was flying from.

In the meantime the wind had veered round to the north and increased in violence, whilst at intervals the rain descended in torrents, hiding the ships from each other's view. When this cleared off the cruiser would be losing way, her chase having altered her course and gone on another tack. Sail had not been shortened as yet, though the masts groaned and every rope was strained to its utmost tension, but so well was each "racked" that though many were snapped no sail was lowered. The captain looked back at his nearing foe, and after a moment's reflection ordered the bolts to be loosened to give the ship more play, and in this manner the race was continued several hours.

The cruiser at length gained so much way as to place her chase within range of the deck gun, which was brought to bear upon her, and in a few seconds an iron messenger came true to its aim; entering on the weather-side of the slaver's hull, it passed in an oblique direction and lodged in one of her main timbers, thus saving the ship, for had not the shot been so checked it must have passed clean through her, in which case no exertion could have stopped the leak in such a sea as was then running. Though the chances of escape now became each moment more desperate,

the captain retained all his wonted coolness of command. First, the carpenter was sent to examine and report on the damage, and in the meantime having had some staves and hoops brought on deck, two or three of the crew set to work making casks of them. He then ordered the hatches to be removed and a couple of slaves brought up.

So far everything had worn an appearance of neatness and cleanliness that would not have disgraced the best manned ship in the British navy. But all this was a mere deception; a thin plank hid from the eye a scene of human misery that a man nurtured in the lap of freedom, were he to bring before his mind every tale of imaginary woe, every form of real wretchedness that he has heard of or met with, all would fall short of the sum of that endured by so many hundreds of his fellow mortals throughout that dreadful day. The hold of a slave-ship may be said to realize man's sensual conceptions of hell, and has been so frequently and graphically described that it were needless for us now to descend there.

Those who were sent to fetch the two victims dared not penetrate its horrid precincts, nor inhale its deadly atmosphere, but took those that were nearest to the

hatchway; these were Kennee and Myha. The young chief was first brought up; to him it seemed as though death was passed and he was in the abode of the blessed spirits, so delicious was the sensation of breathing the uncontaminated air, and receiving on his all but naked body the cool spray of the ocean. But he had not enjoyed these feelings many moments before he was recalled to the reality of his position by seeing Myha at his side. Bewildered as much as he had been, she remained seemingly unconscious of all that was being enacted, and appeared like one transported by some pleasing vision, whilst a faint smile played around her lips; this, however speedily vanished, and she hid her face in her hands.

Kennee had sufficiently collected himself to observe what was passing. An empty cask which they had just put together was thrown overboard, and could be seen at intervals far in their wake as the waves bore it on their crest: another had followed and was only a few yards astern, when a cannon ball struck it and dashing it to atoms passed a few yards wide of the ship; a third was being prepared which he judged was to be the tomb of one of them.

"Let us not die thus like dogs, Myha," said he,

grasping her arm and gazing upon her with an expression that made her shudder, "a single spring and all will be over, and we shall be one in death as we have been in life."

"Oh, Kennee," she exclaimed, "that must not be, if you will trust in God we shall soon meet again, a few moments more of misery for one of us will be repaid by an eternity of bliss. They come, they come; oh, Kennee, will not you speak? will not you—"

She had not time to finish, nor he to answer her earnest appeal, for at that moment two of the ruffians laid hold of Kennee and forcibly stowed him away in the cask they had been preparing, and were in the act of driving down the hoops when a shout which burst from the rest of the crew arrested the murderous deed they were about to perpetrate. But that which was so pleasing to them was only the more bitter to their pursuers, and, doubtless, caused many a hasty oath to be sworn on board the British cruiser. The chase had been a long, and to them, so far, a glorious one; and now, when the victory is all but won, and a very few minutes more would have placed their ship alongside the prize, their course is stayed, and the sons of liberty have to undergo the mortification of seeing the slave

ship fast disappearing, bearing hundreds of miserable wretches to death or bondage.

The cause was thus produced:—the squalls, as we have seen, changed to a steady breeze, and that became a gale; but though the storm increased, neither vessel shortened sail, each captain trusting that his own ropes and spars would prove the toughest, when all at once the cruiser gave a sudden lurch, and checked in her headlong career, trembled in every timber as though she had been imbued with life, whilst at the same instant a sea broke over her weather-quarter, deluging her decks and sweeping everything before it, threatened the destruction of the ship itself. The fore-top-mast had gone by the board, and in its fall the wreck had snapped the main yard, thus terminating the chase.

The shouts of exultation that rose from the slaver's decks, mingling with the roar of the winds and the wild fury of the waves, could be likened only to that of the mariners of a stranded ship, who, when in the depths of despair, first behold the life-boat's approach. The captain stood near the man at the helm, and kept his glass fixed on the disabled ship; a flash from her side called forth a single word, but in a tone that de-

manded and obtained instant attention, and the next moment the slaver went off before the gale, and the cruiser's shot flew harmless past her. The United States flag was now lowered, and she appeared in her true colours: the stars and stripes were replaced by the Brazilian ensign. But this triumph was of short duration, for scarcely had it shivered in the gale before a shot struck the staff, and the winds swept the flag aloft and rent it into shreds.

Whilst the attention of the crew was thus occupied, Kennee had disengaged himself from the unfinished cask, and sprang to the spot where Myha stood. The maiden was still wearing the shackles her brutal captors had put upon her, which, now that they were worn along with her lover, were more easy to endure than would golden chains of the Dahoman monarch have been. She stood on the lee-side of the deck, grasping, with one hand the railing, whilst with the other she restrained, as well as she was able, her flowing hair scattered by the storm, and spangled as with diamonds by the mimic air bubbles falling in a ceaseless shower; for even a situation like that she then was in could not overcome the sense of modesty which, in the days of happiness, had been an inestimable treasure, but which

now, when a captive, only added additional bitterness to the draught; for already had many a look been turned upon her under which she trembled for the present moment, and prayed God for strength to endure to the end.

When Kennee, however, was once more restored to her she felt safe. "This, Myha," said he, "is a dreadful moment for you, but for me it is one of victory. Nothing but a scene so grand, so awful, and a moment when earth and you were to be lost to me for ever, could have dashed away the last lingering ray of trust in the power of the Fetish, which, in spite of all the eloquence of those lips and eyes, and all that the good white man had spoken, still clung to me with a power I could not banish; but now, from this time we can both address the one Great God."

His words filled Myha's heart with joy. "Oh! Kennee," she exclaimed, "these are words I knew must be spoken, and prayed God each morning that it might be before night; and long had I looked forward to the day as one that was to complete my happiness. But God has chosen his own time to grant it, and, doubtless, sends it now in order that we may not fail under our trial; and after this blessing can we not live in hope?"

"As long as I know my Myha has hope I shall never despair."

"That hope," said she, "had all but fled a few moments since; for when you listened to my words I knew that the Fetish were still not quite forsaken, though they could not save Allaroonah from her enemies: but see," she exclaimed, pointing to the disabled ship, "how fast we are leaving the great canoe of the white men, and the thoughts of Allaroonah and of liberty must fade away with it for ever, for if they fail who else will rescue us? They who have braved death amid the storm for us, had they succeeded, could only have been rewarded by our thanks; but the attempt to do this proves that some white men are our friends."

Had the British seamen but heard the speaker, and seen the gratitude that beamed in the captive maiden's countenance, they would have felt themselves repaid for all they had dared and suffered.

So awful is the grandeur of storms at sea that even to mariners, who have frequently encountered their fury, they ever retain the same thrilling interest, and bring to each heart the same inward confession of its own littleness, and the power of Him who directs the winds. How much rather, then, will feelings and

thoughts such as these fill the minds of those who, for the first time, behold the ocean in all its majesty, and hear the waves lashed into foam, as they roar and toss each other beneath the tempest's tread, as it sweeps on its mad career. To Kennee and Myha it was the realisation of all that the mind of man can grasp of the infinite power of God; but fear, as well as admiration, possessed them; and when the distant ship was hidden by the advance of a wave more huge than the rest, Myha would close her eyes and await the death it seemed to threaten.

The "L'Allegro" was now flying along with wind and waves, so that when the latter swept past her she rose and fell as gracefully as does a bird when the summer breeze has raised a mimic tempest in some land-locked bay. It was not so, however, with her enemy; she was often enveloped in a cloud of spray, that rose from the ocean as steam from the boiling springs of Iceland; for the sea made a complete breach over her, whilst her rollings seemed to those on the slaver's deck to threaten her with immediate destruction. British seamanship, however, prevailed over the force of the elements; but, as all hope of capturing the slaver was at an end, the two brigs parted to race no more.

The "L'Allegro's" crew had now time to look about them; some were for throwing the two slaves overboard to save the trouble of opening the hatches, and this would have been done had not the captain interfered—not on the score of humanity, but of gain.

CHAPTER XV.

"At length the waves are hushed in peace,
O'er flying clouds the sun prevails;
The weary winds their efforts cease,
And fill no more the flagging sails.
Fix'd to the deep the vessel rides,
Obedient to the changing tides;
No helm she feels, no course she keeps,
But on the liquid marble sleeps."

CRABBE.

DURING the night the wind gradually abated, and a favourable breeze set in which continued to blow throughout the following day and part of the next, when it died away and a dead calm ensued, and the fourth morning of their voyage broke with a cloudless sky, and not a breath of wind to help to steady the ship; and, as the heavy swell left by the late gale had not gone down, she rolled most fearfully, splashing the water with the main yard, first on one side and then on the other; whilst the dashing about of the unlashed casks and spars, the springing of the brig's masts, and the creaking of her loosened timbers, were

distinctly heard now that the storm no longer deadened every other noise in its own roar.

The seamen, having nothing else to do, were set to overhaul the cargo; but as necessity alone compelled even those wretches, callous to the sight of human suffering, to encounter such a scene as their vessel's hold contained, it is needless for us to follow them there. The dead were thrown overboard, and so many of the living as were able to move sent on deck for a short time, in gangs of forty to fifty at once. Often have we read of caravans of weary travellers, who, dying of thirst, have suddenly espied far off in the desert a group of palms, a sure indication of a spring, and we can picture to our minds the joy that beams on every countenance as each one, rushing to the pool, throws himself on its margin, and lives again. But not more precious to the parched wanderer is the cool draught of sweet water than was the inhaling of the pure air to the poor captives on the deck of the "L'Allegro."

But when the first transport was passed, and they remembered that their lives were spared only to be spent in endless toil and slavery, it is not to be wondered at that some, driven mad by despair, should attempt to throw themselves into the sea. Their

gaolers, however, kept a sharp look-out upon their movements, and woe betide him or her who failed in the leap for death. The sea gradually subsided, and the sweeps being manned, a little progress was made. The heat, however, became so excessive that the crew abandoned them and took shelter beneath an awning stretched across the deck, and the labour was suspended, as a sufficient number of captives could not be found who were fit to work the oars. The chains which had been removed from the captives were again put on, and made doubly secure, in order that the ports might be thrown open. Still such was the oppressive heat of the over-crowded hold, that, had its inmates not been born under a tropical sun, all must have perished. At mid-day the atmosphere glowed with heat, and the air became so rarified that respiration was difficult and painful to an extreme degree.

And there, throughout the live-long day, lay these poor captives, anxiously watching the lengthening of the sun's beams as they shot across the hold. Night they thought would bring some relief; but when morning came the day broke in resplendent glory, and the sun travelled through a cloudless sky to sink again magnificently into the ocean, sending his fiery rays

over the liquid plain, till the ship seemed to be resting on a sea of molten gold. This scene of tropical grandeur had no charms for the weary inmates of the "L'Allegro's" accursed hold, whose thoughts must have wandered back to the spot once endeared by the name of home. Doubtless there were many whose intellects and passions removed them little above the brute, but even they must think and reason. Nor is it right to suppose that Kennee and Myha were the only beings among the hundreds there whose former lives might put to the blush many who boast of their civilization.

Water and provisions, the latter consisting of rice, salt meat, and palm oil, had been supplied sufficient to maintain a full cargo fifteen days, but, calculating for the usual decrease of mouths, they might be made to last twenty. Thirteen days had already expired, and the ship had not accomplished one half of her voyage to the destined port; consequently famine and drought were added to the accumulated horrors of which the "L'Allegro" was the scene.

One day, about noon, as Myha lay wrapt in a state of thought that bore the feeling and appearance of a trance, rather than the working of a mind conscious to all around, a gentle noise mingled with the train of her

reverie. The sound resembled the waving of birds' wings; and so soothing was it that she fancied herself transported to her native valley; for her closed eyes shut out the real scene. Presently the noise grew more distinct, with a slight tapping on the vessel's side, as though the sea was enamoured of the beautiful "L'Allegro," which it kissed in token of its love.

All this was as yet a mystery to the captive maiden, who began to fear, though she knew not why. Not so, however, with the hardy ruffians on deck; to them it was a still small voice, the harbinger of hope and so of life. They recognised in it the ripple that sometimes outstrips the approaching breeze; and thus warned, the watchful mariner is enabled to prepare for the first breathings of the welcome gale. The crew were mustered, but disease and death had been among them as well as amongst the captives, and only seven efficient men appeared. As these were too few to work the ship, the captain ordered eight or ten of the strongest slaves to be got up. Kennee being nearest the hatchway had enjoyed the freshest air, and was comparatively in good condition, so he was selected as one; and in the hurry Myha was sent up amongst the number.

All was now bustle, and every one too busy to think

of anything but his duty, so Myha was allowed to remain on deck, where she clung to the bulwark for support. Kennee exerted himself as well as the stiffness of his limbs would allow him, and by rendering all the assistance in his power escaped the rough treatment bestowed on his less agile companions. His glance was frequently directed towards Myha, whose eyes followed his every movement, and when he sprang up the shrouds, upon being ordered aloft, a faint cry of alarm escaped her lips. But in this there was little danger to him who had followed the wild goat up the face of the precipice, aided only by the tendrils of the climbing plants that clothed its side.

At length the anticipated breeze arrived; every sail was set, and the "L'Allegro," with her fair white wings distended, glided smoothly over the water as though conscious of her gracefulness. Upon the first moment of leisure, and unobserved, Kennee drew near to Myha; she, however, did not notice his approach, for her gaze was directed with a look of horror into the crystal waters. He glanced there likewise, and discovered enough to fascinate him too. Myha's attention had first been drawn to the sea by hearing a loud splash, and supposing some one had fallen from the hind part

of the ship, she looked, but saw only two monsters of the deep contending for the position nearest the stern of the vessel. To her they resembled nothing earthly, for as the ship increased her speed with the strengthening wind so did they; their heads were large, and rendered more terrible by the glistening of their eyes, that seemed like balls of fire. They were the demons that had been in constant attendance upon the vessel through storm and calm, from the very day on which she took in her cargo on Africa's shores to that moment. For, as wolves follow by scent the track of the peasant's sledge over the steppes of Russia, so do sharks accompany the slave-ship across the Atlantic Ocean, instinct guiding them to the floating shambles, from whence death, with a liberal hand, doles out their human food.

Whilst they gazed, a body was thrown into the sea, and hardly had it reached the water ere the two monsters darted upon it with the speed of an eagle's swoop, and each seizing a limb in its upturned jaws, disappeared beneath the now crimsoned waves. Though the sight was horrible in the extreme, yet so powerful was the spell that Myha could not refrain from looking upon it, but when it was passed, the charm

was broken, and looking up, she perceived that Kennee had been a witness also of this dreadful scene.

"How soon may not we share the same fate," whispered she.

"Speak not thus, Myha," said he, "Our God will send us aid. My arm is still strong, and I can work for both you and myself, only say that you have hope, for now hope is life."

Myha could not speak, but a sweet smile told him that his appeal was not in vain.

For days and nights the vessel sped along in her true course, with a breeze so steady that the sails required no setting, nor was a man ordered aloft, except he who kept the watch. And well was it for the sailors that the winds were so propitious, for not only was their number reduced by death, but a distemper having broken out amongst the cargo some of the remainder of the crew had been prostrated by the disease, one of whom was the captain himself. This scourge was brought on by the length of the voyage, and, consequent upon that, by the little food and water allowed the captives. The ship had left the coast of Africa victualled, as we have already seen, for only fifteen days. At the termination of the calm she had been at

sea twelve days, and under the most favourable circumstances could not arrive at her destined port under ten more; the captives had therefore been put upon half allowance, and almost as soon as the pipe through which they were fed touched their lips it was removed again. None of the crew dared now penetrate into the hold, but left everything there to the abler of the captives, and this gave Kennee an opportunity of paying attention to Myha, which had he not been able to do she must have sunk under the accumulation of horrors that surrounded her. He placed her near one of the weather ports, which were open, and if he gave her more water than the strict allowance surely he was not to blame.

It was just before sunset on the twenty-third day that the first glimpse of land was discovered, this gradually became more defined against the cloudless sky, and the peaks of a range of lofty mountains could be discerned, which proved to be the high land behind Cape Frio, about twenty-three degrees south latitude. The wind which had been blowing steadily from the south-east now changed to the north-east with light squalls. As there were several small islands off the cape, the captain shortened sail; and when day dawned the ship was coasting the low sandy hills that separate numerous

shallow lakes from the ocean, and about mid-day the head of the "L'Allegro" was turned towards the shore.

At first, to the eye of a stranger, nothing could be seen but one continuous line of sand-banks, upon which the ship seemed to be running; presently, however, a narrow opening became discernable, with a slight surf breaking over a bar that extended across its mouth. This was passed in safety, and the brig entered a winding channel leading into a small creek, the shores of which were downs interspersed with groves of palm trees. Here the ship was allowed to run a-ground; when immediately the crew left her, and some went in quest of slaves to unship the remains of the cargo—an enterprise which no free man would undertake. During the following day about three hundred and fifty captives were taken out of the ship's hold alive and got to shore on rafts. The "L'Allegro" was then set on fire and became a funeral pile for the dead she contained; a *pyra* more beautiful than any that have consumed the bodies of Roman emperors or Hindoo rajahs.

The flames first issued from the hull, and running along the cordage, licked the tall masts and spars, and, catching the sails that still hung loose on the yards, presented a scene awful but grand. Thus with the

"L'Allegro" perished all legal evidence of crimes too atrocious to be conceived by the sons of freedom, whose hands were unstained by the traffic in men; but the bruised and emaciated bodies of those captives who still lived were proofs sufficient that, with but too many persons, human life and human misery cannot be weighed in the balance against gold. Before the flames had reached the water's edge the powder magazine exploded, scattering the burning wreck far and wide.

Ranchos were now constructed of stakes driven into the ground and intertwined with broom, merely affording a shelter from the sun's rays; and in these the captives were to be lodged until the process of "Making them up" for the auction mart was completed. This is done with less feeling but in a similar manner to that by which cattle are prepared for market. Those who could walk were compelled to take exercise and eat great quantities of food, in order to get them into condition; whilst such as were infected with disease were placed in separate ranchos, where they remained until nature cured or death released them; for no medical aid was at hand, and the survivors amongst the crew were panic-stricken, and dare not approach them.

To depict the condition to which the former of these classes, styled healthy, were reduced, would be merely to picture a gang of poor captives bruised at every projecting bone, which might be said to be each, as they were almost reduced to skeletons, and so stiff that for days even to move was painful. The scene in and about the ranchos of the other class were best left undescribed.

Kennee was, perhaps, the most healthy amongst the whole number, and was therefore employed in attending to his less fortunate companions; but when not thus engaged, he and Myha might be seen seated at the foot of a palm tree whose feathery top waved gracefully in the gentle breeze, and, surrounded with many of the gorgeous flowers nature has lavished on that her favoured land, whilst before them lay the rippling water of the creek, and beyond its opposite margin, far in the background, rose a blue outline of mountains, the first they had seen since leaving their native valley, which these now brought again to their minds. Often before had they discoursed of the future, but never did the future look darker or more mysterious than when from being captives they were to become slaves.

"What a dreadful change has been wrought in our lives," said Kennee, "in the space of so short a time; and how much we have learned, that had we not experienced we could not have believed."

"Yet fain would I sometimes think it all a dream," replied Myha, "a fearful delusion from which I may suddenly awake, and find myself again surrounded by my maidens, or seated at my loom listening to some pleasing story of bygone days from my father's lips. But the clanking of chains, or the noise of a whip, soon dispels all this, and then I have felt, Kennee, though only for a moment, as I did when the tyrant of Dahomy first stood by the side of the couch upon which they had placed me; a feeling as though reason could no longer bear up against the torrent of misery."

Kennee was alarmed at the fearful import of her words. "Thoughts such as these," said he, "should never enter my Myha's mind. Are we not happy even now? And can we cease to hope that liberty, sweetened perhaps by years of misery, may one day be ours?"

"Oh! I know it is wrong, Kennee, and though I pray to God that I may be able to bear whatever he pleases to send, yet a momentary resentment makes my

heart beat quick; but then I think of all that you have suffered for me, and how nobly you endure every indignity in order to shield me and make me happy; for I know that we are to each other all that binds us to life."

"To say that I could live without hearing my Myha's voice, or gazing into those eyes, and dwelling upon that, to me, still lovely face, now so seldom gladdened by the smile of joy, would be to say that were the sun removed from the heavens the earth might still give food and life. A day of temporary separation, however, may be in store for us; let us then be prepared, for we cannot read the future."

This was spoken with such a significancy that Myha started as though it were really about to take place, and bursting into tears she seized his hand, exclaiming "They dare not; no, they cannot; they will not do it."

"That they both dare and can our being here as captives proves; and if they should, this arm may not prevent it. Were it lifted against a white man, a destiny fearful to think of might be ours. No, my Myha, we must not trust in that now; but let a separation be only an incentive to hope. You must live for my sake, for if you will promise this, not all the power of the

white man, nor whips, nor chains, nor the fear of death, but only death itself shall prevent my regaining for us both the freedom of which we have been robbed."

"Oh! what do you ask, Kennee? can I say how long I shall live, or how much misery I can endure? I will endure many things, in the hope that liberty and home may yet be ours."

A sweet smile played on Myha's countenance as she thought of liberty and a home; and Kennee felt glad that he had in some measure prepared her for an event which he knew might now so soon take place.

When the captives had been sometime landed, those who had suffered least were disposed of to a dealer in slaves from Rio de Janeiro, and were at once driven off to be sold at his establishment in that city. The slave gang travelled the country like a herd of cattle, the drivers being mounted on mules, and armed with long whips; but to the slaves, after the hold of the "L'Allegro," this journey was a pleasure. To Kennee and Myha it was indeed so, for they kept together throughout the whole march. At first they had been struck with admiration at the sight of the villages composed of groups of white-washed houses; but who, amongst ourselves, can picture the astonishment with

which they viewed the scene that burst upon them when they crested the hills above the bay of Rio. To them the rude buildings of Abomey and Allaroonah were palaces in reality as well as name. What then must have been their feelings when they beheld stretching before them, on the opposite margin of the bay, the magnificent capital of Brazil—the queen of American cities. It appeared to them like the work of another race of beings, and not of man: its churches and palaces gleaming in the setting sun, stood there in countless numbers, whilst others, interspersed with groves and pleasant walks, were nestled on the hills around; and behind these rose mountain peaks, clothed almost to their summits with virgin forests, and seeming like the mighty guardians of the scene below. But the picture was not yet complete, for far down in the depths of the unruffled waters, another city, resembling the first, with its groves and mountains, could be distinctly seen. On the lake-like bay rode the vessels of many nations; and towering above the rest, in all the majesty of repose, lay two of bulk so vast that they appeared like islands studded with trees, about whose leafless branches small white clouds were hovering. On these Kennee's keen glance recognised the ensign

of freedom, the flag of a people who prove their courage by their generosity. He had seen it only for a moment, as it shivered in the storm during the chase, but it was as the voice of a deliverer whose accents he could not forget.

CHAPTER XVI.

"——— or to live or die
To him was equal; Fortune's tempest dread
Could frown no further vengeance on his head;
Though bound a captive, and in fetters, still
Shone through his soul th' unconquerable will;
His aspect nobly bold, from innate valour bred,"

FROM THE SPANISH OF ERCILLA.

IN the city of Rio there is one particular street where most of the slave marts are situated. These are large rooms, opening into the public thoroughfare, in which the slaves are exposed for private sale; and here are always to be seen numbers of them of both sexes, and all ages, whose only means of release from their prison is by becoming the property of another. It was in one of such human store-houses that Kennee and Myha were placed; and then, and not till then, did they feel the full force of their degradation, or experience the extreme longing for that moment when their agony of suspense was to end.

Little did the anxious merchant, or idle spectator,—for these places are made a sort of lounge in which

many ladies, even those of the first rank, wile away the tedious hours,—reflect upon the anguish that was wringing many a heart, which, though veiled beneath a sable skin, was perhaps more finely tempered than their own. They knew the African only as a slave, or rather as a mere article of merchandise exposed for sale in the public market; what thought they of homes laid waste, of mothers who had seen their infants slain before their eyes, or of the aged left to die, because the white man would not take them. Having always been used to slavery they had become possessed by a morbid feeling that caused them never to reflect upon its wrongs. The truth of this was proved by the extreme indifference with which Myha's imploring gaze was met, when, upon looking into the countenances of the free-born of her own sex, she found neither aid nor sympathy there. Callous, indeed, must they have been whose hearts could not read in the captive maiden's look a tale of grief too deep for words to tell. But many there were standing by who, could they have had arrayed before them all the sorrows with which her heart had been torn since the day when war first polluted her native valley till that moment, would only have smiled at the narrator as a believer in fables.

And, therefore it was, that Myha's eyes wandered from face to face among the assembled groups, like as does a bee over a bank of lovely flowers from which no honey could be extracted, until they met those of Kennee, who was intently observing her every change of feature from hope to despair, and now they found the sympathy they sought. "Take courage," whispered he, "all may yet be well."

The slaves imported to Brazil about that period were principally brought from South Africa, and were much inferior in bodily strength to the natives of the central and western part of that continent; consequently these latter were much prized, and brought a higher sum in the markets; and no less than six hundred and fifty dollars were asked for Kennee and Myha together. But at this price there was no purchaser. An old man, a Brazilian, who had examined them very minutely, offered six hundred, a sum which was ultimately accepted, and the bargain struck; just at that moment, however, a man, apparently about forty years of age, whose dress and accent were evidently not Brazilian, pushed his way through the bystanders and producing money to the full price first demanded, thrust it into the dealer's hand. This of course he could not resist;

and though both the old man and those who stood round insisted upon the first bargain being good, the stranger carried off his purchase, having first had them heavily ironed, and they were placed on board a vessel that was preparing to put to sea.

How joyous beat the heart of one of the captives when, the trial over, they still remained together. It was the maiden; she scarce believed the reality, so great had been her foreboding of evil.

"Oh, how my spirit sank within me," said she, "when I thought it was you alone that the old man wanted; but when he looked at me too, and seemed to speak of both, I could have fallen at his knees and blessed him."

"Would he had been our master," observed Kennee, "I like not this man. See how he scowls at his men, who are using every effort to serve him. And when he paid the price for us he looked only at you Myha; better had the old man have taken you and left me, than that we should have fallen, even together, into this man's hands."

"God has helped us in many troubles, and will He not protect us now? But whither do they take us Kennee? their words are no words to me."

"Their language," replied he, "is that spoken by some among those who brought us across the great water. They talk about the country we are going to, but I cannot tell where it is. Hark! there is some one calling from that canoe: he asks to what port they are going: they answer 'to the Island of Porto Rico.'"

"And where is that; but what says he more?"

"I cannot understand it; but he points to that canoe coming towards us from the shore."

"Oh, look Kennee! In it is the old man who first bought us; those with him have arms; they are soldiers. Perhaps it is for us they come."

And so it was. The Brazilian had appealed to the authorities, and now came to claim the two slaves. As the boat approached the vessel the commander of the latter seemed to be weighing the chances of resistance, for he was a man of resolution—a man who had witnessed the shedding of blood at the capture of the very slaves he had just purchased, though he know it not. He was the same Spaniard who had followed the Dahoman army to Allaroonah—one of the vultures who were gorged with the victims of that horrible tragedy. Little did he imagine that the two slaves now on his ship's deck had performed so important a part in that

scene: that one had been the unconscious Helen, the other the guiltless Paris of the war.

Kennee had not failed to observe, with jealous eyes, the earnest look which the Spaniard occasionally cast towards the captive maiden, and felt glad at heart when the old man mounted the ship's side and claimed them both as his property. He listened eagerly to catch even a word from which to learn their fate, but he could not, for they conversed in a low tone of voice; after some altercation, however, the Spaniard grew warm, and exclaimed with an oath, that they might take the man but not the emperor himself should have the girl.

Kennee divined his meaning more from the jestures he used than from his words, and seizing Myha by the arm he said, in a low but earnest tone, "Be calm, Myha, we have not a moment to lose; they are about to take me and leave you here; but I will follow you, and only death shall prevent me from finding you. Think not that we part for ever; I shall rejoin you, but not till I have something more than liberty to offer you."

His words dispelled the hope that Myha till that moment had felt, and her fortitude deserted her. "Oh, save me, Kennee, save me," she exclaimed, "let me not

stay with that cruel man; let me go with you; say you will not leave me:" and the poor captive clung with an imploring look to the arm which ought by right to have been her protector. How bitter was that moment to him? He looked at the soldiers that stood round, and then at the chain with which he was bound, but could not speak.

"Forgive me," said she weeping, "but I saw again that look I had seen when seated at your feet on the rock, I watched how you kept the path against the Dahomans, and forgot how powerless is now that arm."

"Then, Myha, you loved me as a warrior: can you love me as a slave?"

"Oh, talk not thus, Kennee; I could die for you."

"All I ask is, live for me, and love me as you have done. But we must say farewell; it may be for a long separation, our God grant it may not be a final one."

Myha replied not to his prayer, and though her eyes were closed, he felt her heart yet beat as he placed her gently on the deck. The next moment the soldiers came up and led him to the ship's side, where he turned to take a last look at her he loved, but what he saw almost got the mastery of his reason, for he beheld the Spaniard bending over her; he was about to rush upon

him, when the soldiers pushed him into the boat, which was immediately pulled to land.

This scene had been witnessed by one who, had the laws of his country allowed, would gladly have rescued the two captives from their self-constituted owners. The Spanish ship lay under the stern of a British man-of-war, a little way removed but so near that the words spoken in anger could be distinctly heard on her quarter-deck. "The ban of slavery obliterates all that respect man ought to pay to woman, and taints the noblest impulses of human nature," said her brave commander, as he turned to conceal a tear that rose unbidden at the sight.

Kennee's master was a native of Portugal, but had spent the last forty years of his life in Brazil. He cultivated a considerable tract of land in the Province of Rio, and, being naturally of a benevolent disposition, was more generous in the treatment of his slaves than many of his adopted countrymen, and his conduct, in this respect, was viewed by his neighbours with displeasure, as it tended, naturally, to make their own slaves discontented. The old man, however, cared little for that, he did what he knew to be just. His reply to one who wished him to believe otherwise,

deserves narrating:—"When we are on a long journey," said he, "with a single companion, we like to make our society mutually agreeable: now, I and my conscience are travelling together on very good terms, and if you and yours are not, I cannot see why you should desire to set us likewise by the ears."

He allowed the negroes on his estate a certain portion of time each week to follow some trade or occupation; their earnings being either laid up to purchase their freedom, or spent in any way they chose. Kennee was put into the carpenter's shop, and as he already knew how to use the rude implements of his native country, having from childhood shaped his bows, and dressed his spear shafts, he soon began to handle in a workman-like manner the tools of the white man. His master had not failed to observe the parting scene on the ship's deck, and from this he augured a long period of sullenness and sloth; and was therefore the more surprised to find his new slave both diligent and obedient, respectful without being servile, for he still retained all his native nobleness, and worked because he was not driven but led; had they attempted the former in his then state of mind, the case might have been otherwise; but fortunately for him the

change from being one of the freest of libefty's children to that state in which he was to drain slavery's bitterest cup, came step by step, or nature would have forced a mind like his to rebel, and in a moment of passion drive away the angel form from his heart, where it ever was, reminding him that he had a promise to fulfil, a goal to reach, the course to which was not through violence, but only to be attained by foresight and patience.

Though Kennee, as we have seen, was placed in the carpenter's workshop, yet when the busy season came round he was sent into the plantation; and here he marked the care with which the females and old people were worked, none being compelled to labour beyond their strength. Well fed and clothed, and comfortably lodged, they seemed to him to lead as happy lives as did once the indolent slaves in his own native valley. And though these had to perform more work than they, yet it appeared less irksome to them: a certain habit of industry grafted on their naturally apathetic minds caused them to pass cheerfully through the day's toil in anticipation of the evening's rest. And even those who had been free in their native country seemed equally resigned to their state of bondage; passing a

life totally void of care, and without a thought for the future.

And if they had now no wars to excite them, no Fetish to worship; so, likewise, they had no enemies to fear, no tyrant chief who might any moment deprive them of life in order to become possessed of their trifling property; and to men of common minds this change from confusion and rapine to order and justice, such as existed on the estate of the worthy Brazilian, would not be considered dearly bought even at the price of freedom. Kennee might look with pleasure upon a scene so opposite to that which his imagination had pictured slavery amongst the white men to be, still he could not be happy; his was not an ordinary mind, nor had his life been dragged on in sloth, or passed in the fear of enemies and the exercise of cruelty towards his fellow-men.

Meat and clothing were not to him all that was worth living for; and now that both were provided they failed in making him contented. He had a mind as well as a body, and remembered that liberty was more than a name. His mental powers were, however, to be no longer used, and thus the slave whose mind lay as neglected as the uncultivated wilds, was more valuable

than he. But there was a stronger reason than this why he could not be light-hearted as were his fellows: there was one object ever present to him—freedom; and one thought alone haunted his waking reveries and his dreams—his Myha in the power of white men; and he it was who was to restore her to liberty, but this he could not do until he had first obtained his own release. The process of redeeming himself would, if attempted to be carried out, be a work of years, and in the meanwhile what might not Myha be undergoing; her trials he knew would be many; perhaps severer than she could endure. Thoughts such as these for some time completely unmanned him: so that instead of spending his little spare time in making baskets or calabashes, as did the other slaves, he rambled about the woods without object; for in the solitude of a Brazilian forest he could think of other days, without his musings being interrupted. But when these day dreams vanished, and he looked round everything reminded him that he was in a strange land.

The valley of Allaroonah had been as a garden in which nature had placed some of her choicest trees and shrubs, and delighted in decking its spreading downs with flowers and herbage; guarding the whole from

the outer world by lofty mountains; not so, however, was it here. It appeared to Kennee like the store-house of nature, the country in which she hoarded up every work of her hand, without regard to laws, order, or utility. Innumerable trees and plants flowered on every side, but no one enjoyed their beauty or fragrance; nor was there any hand to pluck their ripened fruit ere it fell to the ground. It seemed to be a paradise for insects and reptiles; but into which it was not intended that man should intrude. Swarms of flies and moths of every hue under heaven filled the still air with their hum as they flitted amongst the not less brilliant blossoms that covered the largest trees in one sheet of bloom, or hung in gay festoons from bough to bough, like garlands woven for a festal day; and to this was added the songs or shrill notes of birds; and in the evening the darting of fire flies gave a new beauty to the scene.

But these hours of musing hastened not the means of a re-union with her whose bright smile was to him more lovely than the myriad gems he saw on every hand. Let us now return, however, to the Bay of Rio, and learn the trials that awaited Myha.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Oh, couldst thou see the struggle of my soul,
Courageously to ward the first attack
Of an unhappy doom which threatens me!
Do I then stand before the weaponless?
Prayer, lovely prayer, fair branch in woman's hand,
More potent far than instruments of war,
Thou dost thrust back. What now remains for me
Wherewith my inborn freedom to defend?"

GOETHE.

WITH what a disdainful look and impatient tread does a caged beast traverse the narrow bounds of his barred prison: whilst his flashing eyes reveal the workings of his savage breast—thus was it with the Spaniard. Upon the departure of the soldiery, his rage at being baffled kept him a long time in a state of great excitement, during which he paced his vessel's deck, frequently casting his eyes towards the spot where the form of his recently purchased slave girl still lay. By degrees his features resumed their natural expression; and with a shrug of the shoulders, he swore a lusty

oath at the Brazilian, wishing him anything but a future of bliss. His vexation was not at the loss of the slave, but at being outwitted by an old man.

He called to the girl, bidding her go below; but Myha's ear was closed to his voice. This he imagined to be only obstinacy, and was about to enforce his commands when he ascertained that she had fainted away; he, therefore, ordered a sailor to carry her below and give her something to eat, for a slave is supposed to be ill only from want of food or through excessive work.

One of the crew of the Spanish ship was an Englishman, an old sailor, who during the wanderings of a long life had visted every quarter of the globe. He commenced his career when quite young on board a man-of-war; and after serving his country for a quarter of a century, entered the merchant service, in which he had remained up to the time when we find him on board a foreign ship; and though now sailing under the Spanish flag, and with those who regarded the enslaving of their fellow-men not as an assumption but a right, still his heart was with the sons of Britain, and his motto "freedom for all." He it was who received the command to remove the slave girl. This he easily

accomplished; taking her up in his long muscular arms as though she had been a child.

His rough embrace had roused her dormant spirit; and as he descended the companion ladder she heaved a deep sigh, and opening her eyes found herself borne in the arms of a stranger. She would have cried for help had her fears allowed her to do so; but when the old man had placed her on a sea chest, tears came to her relief. Under Jack's weathered features was a heart that could soften at the sight of another's wretchedness; and seating himself beside the weeping girl he endeavoured to allay her grief. Gradually her sobs became less violent, and though Kennee was not there neither was her master, she was alone with the old man.

"Dont be alarmed," said he, "I'll see as none of these foreign craft runs foul of yer."

Myha had learnt a few words of English from the missionary whilst a captive at Abomey, and now recognised the language of her companion, though she did not understand his meaning.

"You good white man?" asked she.

The old man smiled and nodded assent.

She now remained silent for some moments. The

thought had struck her that Kennee as well as herself might have been rescued from slavery; and she smiled as the sweet vision of freedom, and gratitude to freedom's sons, filled her mind. The old sailor gazed at her lovely countenance, faintly visible in the gloom of the cabin's borrowed light, and knew from the joy that beamed there that she was deceiving herself with a delusive hope. "Not English ship, this," said he.

If a bolt from heaven had struck the ship, Myha could not have been more startled than by those few but terrible words.

"Not good white man's canoe," she exclaimed, with a look that revealed the bitterness of her thoughts. Her companion shook his head, and all joy fled from Myha's heart. She rose, however, and seating herself, as was the custom of her nation, at the old man's feet, and taking his toil-hardened hand, she clasped it in her own, and essayed to speak, but could not remember even a word in which to make known the anguish of her heart. He spoke kindly to her, and though she understood him not, she judged from his manner that he would be her friend amongst the hard-hearted strangers: nor was she deceived.

During the voyage she had the full liberty of the ship, and went about as she pleased. Her favourite retreat was to a part of the deck where, sheltered from observation, she might indulge her grief, unobserved by any one. Jack took upon himself the office of supplying her few wants; and indeed he was the only one of the crew who paid her the least attention, the rest regarding her merely as a finely-shaped animal; but as they feared their bluff messmate, none offered her violence; and though she lived in peace, she lived in dread, as a fawn might at the close proximity of some savage beasts.

Thus the Englishman protected the captive maiden from the insult of his equals; but she never forgot that she was a slave, the property of another; and that a time must come when her own nobleness and virtue could alone save her from infamy. The Spaniard, her master, was struck with her peculiar style of beauty, so superior to that of any other native born African he had hitherto seen; his knowledge of the different races being confined to those usually sold as slaves. And now, when he saw her oftener by stealth rather than command, he thought her pensive loveliness even greater than under the excitement of the

slave mart, when her every feature was agitated by hope or fear.

Myha had observed the stedfast gaze with which he who styled himself her master regarded her; and so avoided him as much as possible; but his eye was on her when she little knew it. Absorbed as she frequently was in some long, protracted, but delicious musing with her own heart, these were the moments in which she indulged the fondly-pleasing but delusive hope, that the only being upon earth who was able to save her might soon follow and restore to her again that freedom and love from which she had been so rudely torn; but her thoughts did not always flow in so sweet a train; sometimes despair, arrayed in all its dread terrors, lurked so near that she longed to give up the struggle and yield to the accumulation of miseries with which she was surrounded. In those moments she felt like one who, standing on some giddy height, feels an impulse, all but irresistible, to bound from its edge into the abyss below; but a still small voice would whisper to her that the God whom she served was able and willing to save her; and all her misgivings vanished. How many of the daughters of her native land had lost not only liberty and friends, but

that which to her to lose was worse than death itself; so long as she retained her honour she need not fear the slavery that extended not beyond the chain; for she still wore a short one on her wrist, a sort of remembrancer of the degraded position she now occupied in the great family of mankind.

Many days after they had left Rio, Myha had seated herself near one of the bulwarks of the ship; and with her cheek resting on one arm, gazed into the water with a look that told of the total abstraction of her thoughts from the scene around—so deep had been her reverie that her master stood close by some time unobserved. Great was her terror when she looked up and found him there; for a single glance shewed her that he had so placed himself that it was impossible she could leave the place.

"I am glad to see that my lovely girl is happy in being the slave of him to whose lot she has fallen." This he said in broken Arabic, having ascertained that she spoke that language.

"Not happy in being a slave; but happy in the thought that I may ere long be once more free."

"Then you knew the power you had so easily acquired, said he; and that smile I saw a few moments

since was an anticipation of the liberty to which you imagined yourself already restored. Free you certainly shall some day be, but that you must leave to me: the future must be forgotten in present enjoyment."

"It is not from your hand," replied she, "that I expect freedom; for you I will work like the rest of your slaves."

"But if you receive not liberty from me, from whom can you receive it? Why should those dainty hands be made hard by toil when a life of ease is placed within their grasp? A word may now transform the slave into the enslaver. You are silent; remember that what I now offer for your choice, I can at any time compel you to accede to."

The real meaning of the Spaniard's words Myha could not at first understand; but now his design burst so suddenly upon her mind that fear deprived her of utterance. Construing her silence into a favourable reception of his proposal, he took her by the hand. This movement, however, gave her an energy which fear could not subdue.

"Virtue," she exclaimed, starting up, and removing some paces from her master, "is more precious to me than freedom: and with it I shall not part for all that

the white man can bestow. I am your slave to toil for you, but more you can never make me."

"Come, come, you are jesting," said he, again approaching her, smiling; but she confronted him with a look so noble, so determined, that he hesitated. This gave Myha time to collect herself; and a sense of insulted innocence flushed her dark brown cheeks, whilst her lustrous eyes gave her whole countenance a majesty of expression that convinced the Spaniard he had not a simple African to beguile with his specious promises.

"Proud man," said she, in a low but passionate tone, "hope not, because you have been born to a fair complexion, that the God whom we both worship will on that account overlook your wickedness. In Him will I trust; and if He is with me I can bid you do your worst."

"You do not understand me," replied he; "I sought only to serve you, to place you beyond the reach of ignominy and slavery."

"It was not the custom of my country to put chains on those we wished to serve; nor to testify the extent of our esteem by the perfidy we practised."

"I have offered my slave freedom, and do so again, asking only her love as the ransom."

"Oh! for the horrors of the captive's prison," exclaimed the distracted Myha, "for there I was loathed as a being too dangerous to be approached; disease and famine were my defenders, but now health and plenty are turned into a curse. Slave, however, as I am, my conscience shall be unfettered."

The Spaniard was abashed, but assumed an air of bravado, saying it was a good thing to have plenty of spirit, only she must learn how to obey her master.

When he left her she fled below deck to hide her emotion, for the excitement which had sustained her during the conflict only left her the more a prey to dread when she came to reflect upon her situation.

The old Englishman, who was aloft at the time, had watched the scene from first to last, judging from the countenances of both what was passing between master and slave, and felt glad when the latter appeared to withstand the advances of the Spaniard. From that day until the ship's arrival at her destination at Porto Rico, Myha and her master never met; but a change must shortly ensue in her mode of life, which would, of necessity, bring them into frequent contact with each other.

Don Diego had not neglected, whilst engaged in the

service of others, as has been related, to attend to his own interest; and having been successful in six out of the eight cargoes of negroes he had shipped from the Coast of Africa, he was now the possessor of a large estate and a numerous body of slaves. This property was in the island of Porto Rico, from whose shores he had gone a penniless adventurer; but returned enriched with the fruits of his nefarious traffic. Previous to his time, this island had been the least under the curse of slavery of any of those belonging to Spain; by far the largest portion of the population being free; and even amongst the labourers on the plantations not a few were white men. Now, however, slaves became much sought after; and when they could not be obtained from Africa, the dealers did not scruple to seize upon, or entice them away from the British or French Islands.

The plantation of Don Diego was situated some miles from the city of San Juan, having a considerable extent of sea coast, and embracing within it a small but commodious harbour, and was altogether one of the best estates on the island. The position assigned here to Myha was to assist in the household duties; and in these she soon became a proficient; for, being lured on by a hope in the future, and left unmolested

by her master, a certain degree of happiness was mingled with her toil, and she learned to accustom herself to her new mode of life; learning the usages of a people amongst whom she imagined the rest of her life, whether in bondage or freedom, was to be passed; sweetening her task by the thought that in acquiring the domestic arts of the white man, she might one day conduce to the happiness of Kennee, whose parting words had bid her live, if not for herself, for him.

Often was she made to feel the bitterness of slavery; but from no source more frequently than through the foolish jealousies of her own sex, who, little versed in reading human nature, saw in her only a powerful rival. Thus, in some manner cut off from confidential intercourse with her female fellow-workers, she had only one person to whom she could speak without reserve, and this was the old English sailor. Don Diego had been much prepossessed with him, and retained him in his service as a sort of harbour master, for which his seafaring life had fitted him. In the performance of his duties he was much about his master's house, and had many opportunities of conversing with the captive maiden, in whose future he felt a great interest.

When she acquired sufficient knowledge of the Spanish language to make herself understood, she narrated to her old friend the leading incidents of her chequered life; and during the relation, in the innocence of her heart, she failed not to dwell on the happiness she had enjoyed in the days of freedom in being beloved by one who was the noblest of his race; or to recite how, after losing all but life rather than part with her he loved, he had vowed to be again free, and ere long to come and take her away to some place where slavery was unknown. The old man would listen in silence to those pleasing visions of his young companion; afraid to encourage thoughts apparently so delusive, yet unwilling to dash away the cup of hope that grew the sweeter from its being so frequently and so confidently tasted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Excuse
The pride of royal blood, that checks my soul:
You know, alas! I was not born to kneel,
To sue for pity, and to own a master.

PHILLIPS.

KENNEE'S master had from the first noted the superior bearing and great mental development of his newly purchased slave; but long experience of the negro character had taught him that many so distinguished above their fellows, were also endowed with a greater share of the two most prominent failings of their race—cunning and idleness; and therefore resolved to prove, before taking him into favour, how far he was free from these vices. As time glided by, however, and the young man was still industrious, and apparently desirous to learn, he had him removed into his office, where the quickness of his mental powers soon enabled him not only to acquire the Portuguese language, but also French and English; for with the

merchants of the latter nation his master was in constant correspondence.

Kennee had now the full range of the establishment, but he spent the whole of his leisure time in poring over the books he found there. These were principally relating to history and geography, the latter of which were of peculiar interest to him, as he was enabled to discover the relative positions of Porto Rico, ever uppermost in his thoughts, and the kingdom of Brazil. But his researches did not cease there: he learnt many things of Dahomy and Ashantee which were hitherto unknown to him. One day he chanced to put his hand upon an account of the island of Hayti; the narrative of the perfidious conduct of the Spaniards towards the innocent and confiding inhabitants filled his mind with feelings of pity and disgust; then came the details of horrible cruelties towards them, their enslavement and final extirpation, followed by the introduction of individuals of his own race to minister to the vanity and cupidity of the small band of white usurpers of the soil. But his liveliest interest was awakened when he read how the blacks and mulattos, having multiplied until they became eight-fold more numerous than their oppressors, threw off the galling yoke. At the

recital of the dreadful scenes enacted alike by the white man and the negro, he scarcely knew whether to rejoice at the victory of liberty, or lament that it had been gained by so many and such great atrocities.

The love of liberty, however, has ever been the leading motive among mankind for actions of the noblest and the basest sort, and fired alike the hearts of the cruel and the brave. The generous man forgets that to remove from, as well as to place upon a nation the chains of slavery, war and rapine must rage, and all classes of society feel their dire effects. Kennee had seen a people, happy and peaceable, swept in a moment, as it were, into foreign slavery, carrying with them the remembrance of days of joy passed amid the scenes of their native mountains. And if they, his countrymen, could forget this, he could not: the lost homes were rendered more precious to him by the brave struggle with which he had attempted to defend them against the spoiler.

It therefore cannot be a wonder that he should exult at the emancipation of so many of Africa's sons; and whilst loathing their cruelty and pitying their ignorance, should yet look forward with a strong hope that they might one day become a great people. And

now that his native valley was stained with the blood of his slaughtered subjects, fancy delighted in creating a home amid this land of freedom, in which Myha was to be the brightest star. In those vague wanderings of imagination he had already attained a noble position among the citizens of Hayti, and had crowned himself with every blessing.

But these day dreams were not entirely without foundation. He had seen amongst his master's papers the draught of a deed, by which, at his death, the whole of his slaves were to receive manumission. The knowledge of this made Kennee look upon his present state as one which might be any day changed, and then he would be at liberty to follow Myha. But in the midst of these pleasing anticipations a storm burst upon his master which at once blighted every hope of his slave, and plunged him into the depths of wretchedness. So heavy was the blow that for some time Kennee's mind succumbed before it, and nothing appeared in the future but a lifelong bondage.

The old planter was one amongst a considerable number who had long been dissatisfied with the narrow minded policy of the government, which discouraged private energy, and cramped the freedom of

commerce, whilst it fostered a system that was a curse to the empire, and tended more than anything else to brutalize the population. The holding of such opinions by a body of merchants would not have appeared to a British statesman to be dangerous to the well-being of the nation, nor been made a cause of accusation against the individuals themselves; but the Brazilian government thought otherwise. All those who were suspected of being disaffected with the order of things were arrested and arraigned for conspiracy. In this number was included Kennee's master, who being convicted was sentenced to be imprisoned for life, and his estates and slaves were confiscated to the State.

The slaves were immediately transferred to the capital, in order to be sent to the imperial mines near the Rio San-Francisco, and thus Kennee's well-founded hopes of freedom were at once dissipated, leaving him a much more remote chance of rejoining Myha than when they were first separated. He and his fellow slaves were treated as prisoners, being kept in confinement until placed on board the vessel in which they were to be conveyed to the mouth of the Rio San-Francisco. Kennee, maddened by disappointment, had so conducted himself throughout the matter as to be

thought dangerous; he was consequently placed in irons, and so kept until the vessel arrived at her destination, where the slaves were transferred to a smaller boat, in which they might ascend the river.

During the voyage he had brooded over the change in his prospects, and the chances of escaping a slavery from which he knew it was now beyond his power to redeem himself. But as he was entirely ignorant of the situation of the mines to which he was being conveyed, he could form no plans for the future. Day after day they toiled at the tow rope, making little way against the current, until a favourable breeze at length came to their relief and speedily conveyed them to the scene of their future toil.

The mines were situated at some distance from the main river, and on the banks of a small stream issuing from a range of lofty mountains, on whose sterile sides not a shrub, and scarce a tuft of grass, was visible: the whole scene forming a fit temple in which to worship the demon of avarice, and sacrifice for gold and precious stones the lives of thousands of human beings. The slavery in which Kennee had hitherto been held was liberty and happiness compared to that he now experienced at the mines; for bad as it always was, it

so happened just about that period a new system of working them was being tested.

The diminishing revenue derived from the mines had for some time been a cause of serious complaint against the directors, who, among other reforms for lessening the working expense, had adopted one in every respect worthy of a slave-holding people. It was this: the number of slaves was reduced one-third; but the work required to be done by the remainder was rather increased than otherwise; the calculation being that the saving of capital effected by this would more than cover the additional amount of mortality it was known would ensue amongst the slaves, whose value in the market had at that time fallen nearly one half through large importations. In other words, the greater quantity of work obtained in a given space of time was to more than compensate for the excess of wear and tear, if it may be so termed, of the slave gangs: the value of the lives of these poor beings never entering at all into their calculation. The directors of the mines thus realized in the nineteenth century, in their own persons, the fabled monsters—the Ogres of the nursery.

Brazil, however, is a youthful nation, and only retains the vices taught her by older and more powerful states. Not many years have passed since one of the most powerful and highly civilized empires of Christendom, whose name is now synonymous with Liberty, since she—the good, the just, the great—was a buyer of men. She has sons yet living on the price of blood, and daughters who have tasted sweets purchased with the lives of their darker sisters. Britannia even now will not reflect that whilst fostering the produce of slave-holding nations, when her own free sons are sinking in the struggle, she is holding slaves in the name of Brazil, of Spain, of America.

Immediately upon their arrival at the mines, the fresh slaves were distributed among the different gangs, and at once commenced their ceaseless toil. Then came the crisis of Kennee's fate: labouring without hope of reward, and his human nature brutalized by the lash of his driver, if he succumb, only for a moment, to despair, he is lost. But strength of mind was to him what presence of mind is to the Canadian voyager, who, should his frail canoe but touch one amongst the maze of rocks which he is threading, with with the speed of a swallow's flight, both he and it

would be dashed to pieces in the boiling waters around. To few, very few, is it permitted to retain the dignity of soul when the body is degraded to mean purposes: the one is so linked with the other that a mutual fate too often awaits them.

Kennee knew that to remain was death, and that another's life depended upon his own: he resolved to escape, or die in the attempt. For a long time he weighed every plan he could devise, but each seemed impracticable, and none were adopted. Some of his fellows who had fled to the mountains were brought back, lacerated by the blood-hounds put upon their track, and ever after made to work in chains. There were others who attempted to escape by seizing canoes on the river, or by swimming to the opposite bank; but as they could be more easily followed here than among the ravines of the mountains, they all were either captured or perished.

When all means seemed to fail, an opportunity was offered such as might not again occur. A gang of slaves, Kennee among the number, were taken a considerable distance up the main river to a part of the country still covered with virgin forest, in order to fell and float down timber for the use of the mines. The

spot chosen was on the banks of a stream that flowed from the heart of the forest; the trees suitable for use at the mines, being felled, were denuded of their branches, and floated singly to the mouth of the stream, where they were formed into rafts. The scene was unlike any Kennee had yet beheld; and appeared to be given up entirely to the giants of vegetation and their insect devourers. No signs of animal life were there, except a few solitary birds inhabiting the topmost branches of the trees. In mid-day the gloom was that of twilight; and at night the stars could scarce be seen through the leafy cloud that made darkness more awful.

Kennee was stationed at the river, with a few Indians, to secure the logs as they floated into it from the stream. One day, whilst rambling along the bank, he came upon the stump of a fallen tree that seemed to have been artificially hollowed, as though some Indian had worked it for his canoe; but myriads of ants were the carpenters, who were still busy at their work of destruction. At first its strange appearance attracted Kennee's notice; then the thought struck him, "could he not conceal himself in it, and drift down the river." The suggestion had no sooner offered itself than it was

acted upon; and he set to at once to cut away the useless parts with his axe; leaving a fork at one end in order that the log would drift like a canoe down the river. This accomplished, he collected some poisonous herbs in the forest, and with the decoction rid himself of his troublesome assistants. He then stowed away all the farina he could get; and this, with a calabash for his supply of water for the day, constituted his provision for the voyage. His equipment consisted of his knife, an axe, and a bow and arrows belonging to one of the Indians. He now got large pieces of bark, with which he covered the hollow, and binding them on with flowering creepers, made his canoe resemble the solid limb of a tree.

These operations, carried on by stealth, had progressed so slowly that they were scarcely completed when the rest of the gang came from the forest, and preparations began to be made for returning to the mines; whither a small party was ordered to proceed at once. Kénnee, who was one of these, now looked upon all as lost; but something occurred that delayed their departure until the following morning. As soon as all was quiet for the night, Kennee stole down to the river; and taking one of the small boats, paddled to where his log

lay ready; and towing it into the current, concealed himself inside, and then cut the boat adrift, in order to mislead his pursuers. The creepers drawn over the small aperture which he had left as a hatchway into his novel ship, completed the disguise, and at the same time allowed him to look around him.

And thus he bid adieu, for ever, to the tyrant slave-driver's whip; for as this was his last, his only chance of liberty, he had resolved to perish in defence of it, rather than be re-captured, and live a miserable slave. One encounter he had already sustained and been the victor. Whilst proceeding cautiously from the ranchos to the river's bank, a vigilant sentinel had detected his movements; and had he not been an experienced hunter, nothing could have saved him from his savage foe. His first intimation of danger was a rustling amongst the leaves; and he had barely time to grasp his knife, the only weapon he carried, ere a blood-hound sprang upon him, attempting to fix its relentless jaws on his throat. Kennee would rather have faced a lion than this brute; for had he fallen to the king of beasts he would have died a noble death; now he had only to fear mutilation and probable capture; but sudden as was the attack, he was ready when the spring was made

which was to decide the fate of one of them. He received the animal on his left arm, and for a moment arrested its bound, and in that moment the knife entered its heart. He shook the brute from its hold, and gathering a leaf he placed it on his wound, and then twisted some long grass tightly round his arm.

As this encounter was over in a much shorter time than it has taken to relate it, no alarm was given, nor the absence of the fugitive discovered until the gang were mustered in the morning, when it was at once concluded what had happened. Recourse was had to the usual means and the blood-hounds were slipped. Quickly on the trail, they soon came to where the carcass of their companion lay; when giving a short houl they passed on at a rapid pace as though desirous to revenge its death. Upon coming to the water the scent was lost. The dogs were taken across the river, and the opposite bank tried in both directions, but all to no purpose.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Hark! the stern captive spurns his heavy load,
And asks the image back that Heaven bestowed!
Fierce in his eye the fire of valour burns,
And, as the slave departs, the man returns."

CAMPBELL.

WHILST men and hounds were hunting the river's banks, Kennee was gliding slowly, but safely down its placid flood towards the ocean, and so to freedom. Anxiously did he look for the first appearance of dawn; and when at length it came, the heart of the adventurous fugitive beat high with feelings of thankfulness and joy. He felt a courage and reliance in himself which he had never done since Allaroonah fell to the Dahoman; and which a slave can never feel. And when the sun arose in all the glory of a cloudless tropical sky, what a grand, what an imposing scene was then unfolded.

The noble river, flowing on a never ceasing course, without an eddy on its broad expanse, was here passing through a virgin forest that rose on either hand like

dark green cliffs; while anon its current was divided into numerous channels by small islets crowned with graceful palms, and their margins decked with brilliant flowers. Seldom were its waters agitated by the bark of the white man; and almost as infrequent did it now bear upon its bosom the Indian in his light canoe to fish its silent depths or hunt the jaguar on its solitary banks; the children of the soil, within only a few generations of the first appearance of the white usurpers, had all but vanished from this earthly paradise.

The only sounds that broke the stillness of this solitude were the jabberings of the parrots, and the noise caused by the fishing-birds diving for their prey. In Kennee's eyes everything bore a much more pleasing aspect than when viewed a short time before; he saw it then with the eyes of a slave, but now as a free man; and great is the effect of our position in rendering a picture pleasing or otherwise.

So good was the imitation of nature in the decorating of the log canoe, and so motionless its living freight, that soon after daybreak several fishing birds settled upon it, whilst in quest of their morning's meal. Well was it for the fugitive that he had adopted great precaution; for about mid-day he observed a boat ap-

proaching, gliding swiftly down the river; and seated at the stern was one of the overseers proceeding, he had no doubt, in quest of himself.

The party were coming directly in mid-current, and seemed to Kennee to be making for his drifting log, which he had placed, by means of a small paddle which hung loose at the forked end, and could be used either for a rudder or a scull, so as to be equally removed from either bank; this he did to obtain the greater speed, and to be more secure as he thought; for the boats ascending the river would keep near the banks. It was not a cowardly fear at the thought of the noisome prison, or the lash and ceaseless toil he knew would be his should he be discovered, that made Kennee's heart beat quickly as the distance between himself and his foes grew less and less. He had been indulging in the delicious thought that he was on his way to join his Myha—to be her deliverer—to claim her for his bride; and it was for her he trembled, knowing how closely her fate and his own were interwoven.

The people in the boat were many, and the overseer was armed; resistance, therefore, would be of no avail; but still Kennee felt his native courage return, and he

could not brook the thought of submitting; he grasped his knife, resolving to die, but not to die alone. There was one chance, and he remained quiet, remembering that the antelope is safe from the lion so long as she lies concealed; but even this hope vanished when he saw the gun of his foe directed full upon him. The flash is followed by a shout from the negroes; and the same instant, a shower of feathers, like flakes of snow, fall on the water: two of his fellow-voyagers, the birds, topple into the stream. He hears the rush of the boat through the water—another moment and his fate will be sealed—how worse than useless then would be to attempt to depict the feelings of the fugitive—we will leave it to the imaginings of those who have seen, as they supposed, an inevitable and instant death before them, for they alone can know its terrors; but there is another sensation which none but these may tell—the danger is gone, the lightning's flash is vanished, and they are unhurt.

The boat shot past, Kennee felt the motion of the water, and heard its riple on the side of the canoe, and in a few moments he was again in solitude. The change, however, from despair to life and freedom left him in a state of mind little in accordance with the

quiet of nature; but weariness at length overcame every other sensation, and he fell into a slumber that was disturbed by visions, in which he saw Myha as a slave in the power of the haughty Spaniard, and himself her taskmaster. From this troubled sleep he was all at once roused by his canoe coming into violent contact with some hard substance. Whilst he slept a strong wind had brushed the river, drifting him towards one of its banks; and to his dismay he now found himself alongside a rude quay, constructed of the stems of young trees driven into the bed of the river, and bound together by boughs.

Catching hold of some branches he drew his canoe close to the side, and looking cautiously around perceived the lights of a large fazenda; and discerned against the sky, for the sun had set, the figures of two men pacing to and fro. As they passed above the spot where he lay he recognised in one of them the overseer from the mines, and doubted not, from the earnestness of their discourse, that he was the subject of it. Not daring to risk another return of his enemies, he pushed himself off as they receded, hoping to escape unnoticed amid the croaking of bull-frogs and the humming of beetles. But these sounds only tended to make the

stillness of the forest seem the deeper when unbroken by any other noise; and the splash, slight as it was, made by the log as it passed into the current, instantly attracted the attention of the overseer and his companion. One of them fired a pistol at it supposing it to be an alligator; but the bullet lodging in one end of the canoe they took it for what it appeared to be, and went away laughing at their mistake.

After this adventure Kennee grew more cautious; and keeping awake during the day, paddled himself after sun-set to one of the many islets that dotted the river, and there lay concealed among the reeds until a little before dawn when he again took his station in mid-stream. And thus day after day passed, without any occurrence worthy of note, until one morning he was surprised to find himself higher up the stream than when the sun went down the previous night. But he soon discovered that he was now within the influence of the tides, and in mind the eagerly-wished for ocean was already reached.

He had, however, many a long and anxious day to pass ere his eyes were gladdened by a boundless horizon; many circumstances tending to make his progress slower each day, for now much of the day-light

was spent in awaiting the ebb of the tides; at which times he would secure his canoe to the bank of the river, or to some stranded tree. His little stock of farina too was almost exhausted, so that he was obliged to spend much time in collecting berries and roots. But even this resource failed him; for the forest gradually became less dense until it ceased altogether, being succeeded by a tract of barren hilly country: here his bow and arrows served him in shooting fish and small birds. This he continued to do in comparative safety until the solitary fazenda gave place to a well-cultivated country, interspersed with villages. The river, too, was traversed by numerous boats, rendering it unsafe during the daylight.

The banks were very wide apart, and the river's bed broken up into several channels by low sandy islands covered with reeds. Here he was fortunate enough to find large quantities of nuts of all descriptions, left at high-water mark by the receding tides. Many of these were quite fresh, or dried in the sun; and so afforded him a most acceptable provision.

One morning upon awaking from a short slumber he heard the distant roar of the surf; it was the waves of the advancing tide breaking on the bar. What to

others was a sound of danger, was to him the most delicious music; or like the voice of a multitude welcoming him to freedom. At the mouth of the river stood a considerable town, the principal port of the district; and here lay his greatest risk, because on account of the numerous shoals he was obliged to take the day ebb. The town, however, he passed in safety; but still between himself and the ocean was an apparently unbroken line of white waves through which he must pass ere the land of slavery could be left.

Whilst running his eye along the surf to find some out-let, he observed a boat, in which were two men, approaching. They made directly for his canoe; and upon coming alongside fixed a rope round it and began towing it towards one of the banks of the river. Kennee soon made up his mind as to what he should do; for he was not going to allow himself to be quietly carried back to slavery just when he had begun to feel once more like a free man. He, therefore, cut the creepers that held the covering on his canoe, to give himself more freedom of action; and springing up leapt into the boat. Before the men could recover from their surprise, he seized one and threw him into the river; and after a short struggle the other was about to follow,

when he implored so hard for his life that Kennee relented, but took the precaution to tie his hands.

In the meanwhile his companion had been swimming after the drifting boat, for the current was so strong that it would have been impossible for him to reach the nearest shore. The men said they were stationed there to prevent drift timber from floating down, and wrecking up the only passage there was across the bar. Kennee consented to pick the man up on condition that they took him over the bar. To this they gladly agreed; and having done so in safety stowed away in his canoe the water and provisions they had with them. He then hoisted a small piece of canvass on a handspike for a sail, and taking a couple of paddles with him parted company on much better terms than either he or they had expected. As there was a breeze blowing off shore, he stood right out to sea, not knowing or caring where he went so that he only left the hated shores of Brazil; for to his mind the sublime terrors of the ocean were less to be dreaded than slavery.

At the very time when Kennee had regained his birthright, and flushed with hope, was already become, in imagination, the deliverer of his Myha, she was draining the bitter cup. For some time after the ship's arrival

at Porto Rico, Don Diego was too much occupied with the affairs of his plantation to bestow any thought upon his newly-purchased slave girl; and Myha began to flatter herself with the hope that he had forgotten her. But this was not the case: she was only enjoying a season of respite, to the prolongation of which many circumstances had contributed. A period of leisure, however, at length came round, and with it a renewal of Myha's trials.

It was her firm resolve never to give way to the importunities of Don Diego: but at the same time she was careful not to exasperate him, lest in a moment of anger he should sell her, and thus the only clue by which Kennee could discover her would be broken. At first she endeavoured to appear as though she did not understand him; but when ignorance could no longer be affected, she threw herself at his feet, and implored him not to ask that of her which their religion forbade her to grant; for Don Diego was a strict observer of the rites of the Romish faith, and had all his slaves baptised. However he only laughed at her, supposing the line of conduct she adopted to be a mere subterfuge to extort from him her liberty. But when she refused to receive even that from his hand he vowed he would

sell her to a merchant from Cuba, who was then stopping with him. "Oh do not send me from this island," she exclaimed, for his threat had awakened her worst fears, "I will work for you; and if I could ——."

Grief would not allow her to finish the sentence; and her master thought that time would bring about a change. Instead of this she now became more reserved than before; preferring rather to submit to be the object of the coarse but harmless jests of her fellow slaves than listen to the polished but insidious language of Don Diego. In her eagerness, however, to avoid an open enemy, she placed herself in the path of a concealed one—no other than the dreaded Nar-Chez.

In order to explain how it was that this treacherous Dahoman became once more Myha's foe, it will be necessary to go back to the time when, baffled in his design of carrying off the Fellatah maiden, and having obtained his life at her intercession, he had been sent to Coomassie. The king of Ashantee was pleased with the present of the Dahoman Chief, sent him by his royal brother of Allaroonah; and it was during the short period in which that monarch was intending to assist Kennee against their mutual enemy, that Nar-Chez was sold to a foreign slave dealer. We have seen that this

fit of generosity in the court of Coomassie was soon overcome by the cunning of Dahoman diplomacy. Not, however, till it was too late to save Nar-Chez, who had been already shipped, along with about fifty other captives, in a Spanish sloop. After being three days at sea they were taken by a British cruiser, and landed at Sierre Leone. Whilst here, not choosing to abide by the laws of the colony, he was placed in confinement. Escaping from this he fell into treacherous hands, and was again sold as a slave, and finally landed on the island of Porto Rico.

After changing masters several times he got at last on to the plantation of Don Diego, where his vices recommend him to the favourable notices of the overseer, who placed him at the head of a gang of his fellow slaves. In this capacity his presence was sometimes required at his master's house; and here it was that he saw and recognised Myha. From that moment visions of the past were constantly before him; and as he regarded her as the author of all his misfortunes, a desire for revenge became the sole aim of his existence: his every thought how he might best accomplish it.

CHAPTER XX.

"Then plainly was it shown
How well the vassals loved their generous Lord,—
They crowded round; they clasp't his knees;
They snatch'd his hand; they fell upon his neck;
They wept; they blest Almighty Providence,
Which had restored him thus from bondage free."

SOUTHEY.

KENNEE continued drifting before the land breeze the whole of that day, and by evening the low sandy coast had sunk from his view; he looked around with a feeling of delight; the hated land of slavery was nowhere to be seen. Free, and confident in his own powers, he regarded the future as a storehouse of pleasure; and his canoe had already, in imagination, traversed the unknown expanse of ocean that separated him from his Myha; and when, overcome by fatigue, he sank to sleep, it was a mere change from a waking vision to a more flattering dream, in which Myha, free like himself, was the principal phantom.

But these delusions were rudely dispelled; a squall had caught his sail, which, in a feeling of security, he

had left fastened, and in an instant he was thrown into the water. He soon righted his canoe; but not before losing all its contents. The weather became boisterous, causing a considerable sea to run, in which it gave him no little trouble to keep his canoe, now completely water-logged, from rolling over. When day broke on the second morning, he observed, not far off, a vessel which he supposed to be a Brazilian, as she was evidently making for the coast he had just quitted with so great joy. This alone would have been sufficient cause for his not attempting to make himself seen; he therefore allowed her to pass on, and was again alone on the agitated and boundless ocean.

The wind died away, and the sun, hitherto obscured, shot down his fiery rays; then it was that he began to feel the true nature of his situation—without provisions or water drifting at the mercy of the elements he knew not whither. As the day wore on he anxiously ranged his eyes over the horizon; but he gazed in vain, for the sun disappeared, setting in all her splendour, and left him weary, but not despairing. With daylight he resumed his watch; a breeze had sprung up which freshened as the day advanced, when about noon he perceived the spars of a ship appear above the horizon;

presently her hull became visible and she seemed to be standing towards where he was.

As her progress was slow he had time to reflect upon the course best for him to pursue. He was now too feeble to reach the shore again, having been so long a time without food or fresh water, had he been so disposed; whilst to remain as he was even another day would be all but certain death; and then, if he were carried back to slavery, was there not the chance of escape? Nature too clung to life and prevailed.

When the ship was about an English mile distant from him she wore, and went off on the other tack. Hunger had now subdued the haughty spirit Kennee's newly acquired freedom produced, and standing up he shouted wildly, tossing his arms into the air. But the ship continued in her course, and with her departure his only hope for life seemed to vanish. At that moment his eye caught the hand-spike that remained fixed in the log, and tearing a strip of white cotton from his clothes, he held it aloft as a signal. Great was his joy when he saw the ship's sails backed; presently a boat was lowered, which, pulled by four men, was soon alongside his canoe.

Regardless whether they were friends or foes, he

leaped into their boat, and the next moment they were dashing through the water towards the ship. It was some time ere Kennee recovered himself sufficiently to comprehend the nature of the change so suddenly brought about; the excitement of the last few minutes having all but prostrated the little of life remaining to him. At length the man at the helm addressed him in English, saying, "Well, my hearty, how came you to be adrift on that old stump—got blow'd off shore, I suppose, in that last puff?"

"You Englishman?"

The sailor nodded assent, when Kennee seized his hand, exclaiming, "Thank God I am no longer a slave!"

The instant they were on deck the ship resumed her course, and the stranger having been refreshed by a little food, was conducted to the captain, to whom he related his escape from slavery. This he was enabled to do by helping out the little English he knew with Portuguese, a language familiar to the captain, who was struck with the African's dignity of manner. Nor was this first impression at all lessened when his general character became more fully known during their subsequent intercourse.

His manly bearing, and the unfeigned pleasure he expressed at being on board an English ship, and under the protection of the British flag, soon won him the friendship of honest Jack; and many an hour was spent by the crew in listening to the narration of some of the adventures of his chequered life. His manner was pleasing to them, though much had to be expressed rather by signs than language. After the first curiosity of his new friends was in some degree appeased, he began, very naturally, to enquire to what place the ship was bound. Great, therefore, was his joy when he learnt that a port on the south coast of Hayti was the next at which she would stop. She was named "The Good Luck," and was out on a general trading voyage.

A strong current and fair wind carried them rapidly onwards in their true course, and in a few days the hitherto boundless horizon became dotted with islets, and the ship entered the labyrinth of the Antille group. Nothing that Kennee had yet seen could equal the loveliness of these ocean-girt gardens, each of which seemed an Indian Paradise, inhabited by geni under the form of beautiful birds, that passed and repassed in large flocks from islet to islet. If such ideas had

ever entered his mind, they were quickly dispelled when he heard narrated a few of the crimes that have rendered the name of Caribb execrable.

Leaving these they entered the sea known to the Spaniards as the "Ladies Sea," through which their ship was borne like the enchanted bark in which the knights were sent to fetch Rinold from Atlantis Isle; gliding along over the gently swelling deep until the mountain peaks of Hayti appeared, rearing their blue summits to the clouds. Kennee's excitement now became intense; in them he saw the free possessions of his once oppressed race, and looked with triumph on the land which he viewed as the nursery of a people who, having broken the chains of slavery, were about to become an illustrious nation.

It was in the gray light of dawn that the ship came to an anchor. Kennee was on the look-out, eager to obtain a clearer view of the abode of freedom; and as the glorious tropical sun arose, it disclosed a picture full of sweetness, blended with an awful grandeur such as man is seldom fated to behold.

"This," he exclaimed in an ecstacy of delight, "shall be my future home; to this spot, not cursed by slavery, shall my Myha come. Blessed, indeed, must my

countrymen be in possessing a land like this, but more truly blessed am I in being permitted to share it with them."

Half frantic with joy he took the captain's hand in his own, for he had proved himself not unworthy the companionship of the white man, and thanked him in Portuguese for his kindness, and more especially for bringing him to so happy a shore.

The Englishman shook his head, "All is not so fair, my friend," he said, "as it now appears, the coral reefs look beautiful in a calm, but many a brave heart has perished on them—so have they here and so will they again."

"But their enemies are driven from the island," replied he, "how then should this happen?

"Because they are themselves their worst enemies."

Scarcely had the captain uttered these words ere a shout rose from the small town that stood at the head of the bay, imbosomed in trees. This was followed by a confused noise of voices, mingled with the clash of weapons and firing of muskets. All this told that some deadly strife was raging. Kennee sprang aloft to obtain a better view, and from his elevated position observed a small band of soldiers, amongst whom was

one whose uniform, more showy than the rest, pointed him out as a person of note; these were pursuing a number of men, who, though armed, were not in the garb of soldiers. Kennee supposing the latter to be the townspeople who were beset by a troop of invaders, felt his blood boil at the sight, "Would I had a sword," he exclaimed, "for then I might help them." Presently a large body of men issued from a defile in the mountains, and rushing into the fray stayed the tide of battle, and the soldiers in turn were compelled to retreat. This they did in good order until, hemmed in on every side, they stood at bay where an overhanging cliff protected them on one side. Kennee's heart was with the people, but still he could not help admiring the courage of the small band of soldiers who were only as one to ten of their assailants.

A boat, in which was a young and well-built negro, put off from the shore, and coming alongside the ship, a rope's end was thrown over, and the young man sprang on deck. He was habited in the usual dress of the peasants of Hayti, and was, to all appearance, one of that class. His attempts to render the little French he could speak intelligible were defeated by his breathless haste. Kennee joined the knot of sailors

who, eager to learn the cause of the fight, were collected round the stranger. Kennee had not stood there many moments ere he pushed his way through, exclaiming, "Allah! do you not know me?"

The young man gazed in silence into Kennee's face, as though afraid to believe what he saw. "Has the curse of slavery so changed my appearance that my once best loved friend does not recognise me?" "I saw the form of the Young Lion of Allaroonah," said Allah, saluting Kennee after the fashion of his nation, "but, until I heard his voice, I could not believe it was indeed he. I came to ask for aid to rescue the Prince Royal from that band of robbers, little expecting to find him who has so often led us on to victory."

"But are not the people defending their property from those who would seize it?"

"They are not what they seem to be," replied Allah, "they are rebels in disguise. It only wants your voice and the war-cry of 'Allaroonah and liberty,' to make our warriors fight."

Kennee needed no further persuading, but choosing a sword from those belonging to the ship, he leaped into the boat. When they touched the strand, Allah darted into the woods, returning in a few moments with

about twenty men armed with short swords. These, led on by Kennee, rushed towards the scene of battle, the war-cry of "Allaroonah and liberty" ringing through the forest. These magical words called forth warriors on every hand, and ere long a hundred voices rent the air. The whole band at once threw themselves on the enemy, who were totally unprepared for such an onset. The struggle was short but deadly; as for Kennee he cut his way towards the spot where the Prince was hemmed in by numbers of his assailants, to whose swords he must soon have fallen a victim; but now finding himself thus supported, he fought with renewed vigour, and the rebels, attacked both in front and rear, were seized with a panic.

Those who escaped slaughter fled to the mountains, whither Kennee followed them, and succeeded in capturing many. Upon returning to the town he was at once conducted to the Prince, who waited in great impatience for his return. He embraced him, expressing his admiration of his noble figure, and how overjoyed he was to find that the man whom he had to thank as the preserver of his life was of royal lineage, and promised that nothing he could do should be left untried to make him cease to regret that he was no longer an African king.

Kennee was well pleased with the prospect thus held out to him of future aggrandisement, but at the same time he could not help wondering that personal appearance and high birth should have greater attraction than courage for one who had just proved himself so brave. He concealed his disappointment, however, replying that his position as king of Allaroonah must doubtless be surpassed by many even of the servants of so great a monarch as the Emperor, his father. The Prince was pleased with the stranger's courtesy, and the two conversed long together.

A courier was despatched to Port-au-Prince for a reinforcement of troops, and in the meantime, the little town was put into the best state of defence the limited means would allow. Had other proof been wanting to satisfy the prince of the correctness of Kennee's story, the recognition and reception he met with from his former subjects would of itself have been sufficient. On the morning after the attack, when order and confidence were restored, the whole of the Allaroonahans, about six hundred in number, of both sexes, came to greet their late king, who, they all supposed, had been offered up to the Fetish of Abomey. Many of the young warriors danced for joy, whilst some of

the older ones shed tears at the remembrance of other days.

Nor was Kennee less affected when he recognised among them familiar faces which he had never thought it possible he could see again. Now his notice was importuned by one who had fondled him when a child, perchance an inmate of his father's palace; then again his eye rested on another who, though more bashful was not less glad; she had been the sharer of his boyish sports, but was now a young wife and mother; the playmate of his youth; his companion in many a daring encounter with the denizens of the forest, and the warrior who had fought at his side in defence of wife and maiden again knelt at his feet. Truly that was a joyous meeting; and so much was every one possessed by the spirit of their chief, that all avowed their willingness to follow wherever he might choose to lead them. The way in which they gained their liberty and became located where Kennee so unexpectedly found them was this:—

Upon the sacking of Allaroonah, a gang of captives, numbering about a thousand, were driven to the coast; and after undergoing great hardships, such as survived were shipped on board a slaver, intended for the plan-

tations of Cuba. Their destination had almost been reached when the ship was struck with a hurricane, by which she was dismasted and became a complete wreck; and in this state, the crew having previously taken to the boats, was cast on the island of St. Domingo. Almost the whole of the captives escaped, and a tract of land on the shores of the bay was assigned to them by the Haytian authorities on which to form a settlement, and here they built a village, calling it by the name of Nootah.

CHAPTER XXI.

"The day is lowering—stilly black
Sleeps the grim wave, white heaven's rack,
Dispers'd and wild, 'twixt earth and sky
Hangs like a shatter'd canopy—
As though the infant storm had rent
The mighty womb that gave him birth,
And having swept the firmament,
Was now in fierce career for earth."

MOORE.

THE rancorous feeling that had existed between the inhabitants of Hayti when the island was divided into two states, had not subsided when the whole became united under one sovereignty; for though the man whose fortune it was to become the head of the government assumed the title of sole ruler and Emperor of Hayti, yet the power he wielded was far less than that which he claimed. A spirit of jealousy among the nobles, both towards himself and each other, led them into frequent acts of unprovoked hostility; and such in the present instance was the case. The rebels, having learnt that the Prince Royal was at Banco, near which

was the Allaroonahan village, attended only by a handful of soldiers, sent an expedition to surround the place and take him prisoner. This they would doubtless have effected but for the arrival of Kennee.

This band was, however, only a portion of a large body that had risen in insurrection, and was laying waste the country. The first intelligence received of this at Banco was given by the fugitives from an army sent by the emperor against the rebels; but the latter had been victorious, and were now spreading consternation over the whole country. Kennee, meanwhile, had collected together all whom the influence of the prince could induce to join his standard; these, with the addition of the fugitives from the main army, amounted to two thousand men. The flower of this little band was the small body of Allaroonahans numbering about a hundred warriors, all well armed and eager for the contest.

Like the Theban "Band of Lovers," led on by Pelopidas, they flew to the point where the greatest danger was to be found; but as Kennee was much deeper versed in the tactics of war than was the rebel commander, he often gained more advantage by stratagem than force, and finally compelled the rebels to relinquish

their booty, and retreat into the mountains. For these achievements he was made a general in the Haytian army, and the emperor sent for him to court, in order that he might with his own hand confer some mark of gratitude upon him. But in the midst of the excitement and tumult of a camp he never ceased to remember that Myha was still a slave, and though ignorant of the distance from Hayti to Porto Rico, it was a land which had long been to him what Cathay or India was to Columbus, and to attain its shores was the aim of his existence. Great, therefore, was his joy when he learnt that the island was within a few days' sail of the very place where he then was; and, as soon as circumstances would allow, he equipped a felucca, the command of which he gave to his faithful follower Allah. His instructions were, to proceed as quickly as possible to the island, and, landing upon some convenient spot, ascertain where the plantation of Don Diego was situated. If it should be near the sea-coast, they might proceed there at once, and endeavour to ascertain the fate of Myha, and then act according to circumstances. If, however, the estate was in the interior of the country, only the interpreter, a Mulatto, was to proceed thither, the rest returning for him to

the island in a certain number of days. This precaution was the more necessary because if they were discovered to be from Hayti, they would be seized and sold for slaves: all communication between that kingdom and the Spanish islands being interdicted.

Immediately upon completing the preparations for the expedition, and when he had seen his friend depart, he prepared to wait upon the emperor. His expected arrival at the imperial court created no little excitement; for although the nobles and generals were already jealous of his rapid rise and increasing fame, still they could not, but feel desirous to behold so "fortunate" a man, for so they chose to speak of him whose generous spirit had exposed his life in the cause of Hayti, whilst they remained about the palace revelling in idleness and debauchery. The ladies, too, were almost dying of curiosity to see him, having heard that he was as handsome as brave; they had received proof of the one, and wished to convince themselves of the other.

Nor were they doomed to disappointment. His band of Allaroonahans, in the uniform of one of the imperial regiments, and trained with great care, formed a marked contrast, as they marched under the eye of

their beloved chief, to the slovenly air of the other soldiers. These, however, were only as the smaller gems in which the precious ruby was set; in the midst of the troop, mounted on a charger, rode Kennee; his countenance revealing the emotions of his mind; for his heart was gladdened at the sight of so free and joyous a people. On the following morning he had a private audience of his imperial majesty, and the next day the emperor held a special court, at which Kennee was created a noble of the empire, under the title of Duke of Banco, with the power of collecting toll in the district of that name; he had also conferred upon him the Order of the Legion of Honour.

A few weeks had sufficed to remove him from an almost hopeless slavery in the mines of one of earth's potentates to place him near the throne of another, and from meagre fare and a hard couch to surround him with all the luxury and dissipation of a semi-civilized court. A short residence at the chief city was long enough to dispel some of the romantic ideas he had formed of Haytian freedom and happiness, and to disgust him with the licentiousness of the people. He therefore took the earliest opportunity of retiring to Nootah: and fearing lest his Allaroonahans should contract the

vices of their fellow-soldiers, he took them along with him.

He had not been long at Nootah when Allah returned from his expedition to Porto Rico. Such was Kennee's impatience to learn the fate of his Myha—for he still loved to call her his—that he took a boat and went out to meet the felucca. Great, then, was his disappointment when he learnt that they could not give him any positive information about her. The plan they adopted was to make for some part of the coast free from towns or villages, and drawing the boat under the shore, send the interpreter to ascertain if the plantation of Don Diego was in that part. After landing thus two or three times they at length succeeded in their object, and made directly for that part of the coast pointed out to them. Upon coming to a small harbour upon the estate they ran boldly in, and stated that they were sent by their overseer to catch fish off the east coast, but having had the misfortune to stave their water-cask requested permission to refill it, and whilst doing so learnt that a slave girl answering the description of Myha was then in the house of Don Diego. Being looked upon with suspicion, however, they were not allowed to go into the country, and so thought it best

to return with the little information they had already gleaned.

To any but those whose minds were tempered as Kennee's was, the results of the expedition would have been regarded as meagre in the extreme, or at least, discouraging; and so it was to him, with these exceptions, that they had found out the position of Don Diego's estate, and that a slave girl answering the description of Myha was in his house. Kennee doubted not for a moment that it was Myha, and his mind was at once made up as to the course to be pursued. He chose twenty men from amongst his followers, and had them clothed in the dress worn by the slaves of Porto Rico, himself wearing that of an overseer: with these, and Allah, all fully armed, he set sail for the island.

In a few days they made its coast, and kept as close in shore as possible, until approaching the estate of Don Diego, when the weather, which had hitherto been fine and calm, suddenly changed, and for several days there was a succession of squalls accompanied by rain, compelling them to keep off the land. All at once the wind, which had blown from the north, veered to the south, and then died away altogether; the atmosphere became oppressive, and a peculiar haze

hung over the Spanish main, from which a heavy sea began to roll in; all these being signs indicative of an approaching storm, and with which every inhabitant of the West Indies is familiar.

As they well knew that their boat could not live in a gale of wind, it was thought most prudent to run for the harbour on Don Diego's estate, and risk the dangers to be encountered on land, rather than await certain destruction from the elements. Accordingly the sweeps were manned; and, borne along by the increasing swell, the boat soon entered the small harbour or bay of Composta. There all was bustle and confusion, preparing for the expected storm, for the warning had not been neglected. Besides a few large vessels there were several small coasters, the crews of which were busied in lowering the yards and topmasts, and running out additional cables, whilst others were constantly coming in for shelter. Under these circumstances the entrance of the felucca was unnoticed, and they ran her ashore on a low sandy beach at some distance from the other craft, and removed from her all the stores and heavy tackling, which they carried behind some rocks a little distance off.

Meanwhile the first puffs of the storm had been felt; the oppressive calm was first broken by a few light airs, gradually increasing in force until they became a strong wind, which suddenly ceased, and again a calm, more still and awe-inspiring even than the first, succeeded; and then it was that Kennee, attended only by Allah, set forth to learn, if possible, some tidings of Myha. The house of Don Diego stood about six hundred paces from the head of the harbour, and at least twice that distance from the place where they had landed. The two adventurers at once struck into the plantation, in order the better to escape detection; but that proved to be an all but needless precaution, for everything endued with life—man through reason, the beasts by instinct—were solely intent upon securing some place that seemed safer than another, in which to await the threatened destruction.

The season of harvest was just approaching, and all nature teemed under the luxuriance of its yield. The air was laden with the odour of delicious fruits and the perfume of countless flowers of every hue, that sprang up as lovely weeds on every spot not claimed by the husbandman; and whilst these, the poetry of the fields, pleased the eye, the heart was

gladdened by the abundance promised as the reward of toil. But Kennee and his companion were in no mood to indulge in thoughts such as these. Cautiously they threaded their way towards the house of Don Diego, which was yet a considerable distance from them, when the death-like stillness was interrupted by a low sobbing sound, as though nature were mourning over the inevitable spoilation of her labours. A gust of wind swept across the plantation, and in a few minutes gained such strength as to tear up the more tender sorts of plants, filling the air with their fragments; whilst the ripe cotton, which only an instant before was clustered in downy handfuls round the brittle pods, appeared like a mimic snow storm as the blast stripped it from the plants.

The hollow roar of the surf, when the immense rollers broke on the strand, added to the gloom which was rapidly obscuring the light of day, gave tenfold terrors to the scene. As the blast increased in force the trees that could accommodate themselves to it were bent until their topmost boughs, now shorn of leaves, touched the ground, whilst those that could not succumb were either torn up by the roots or snapped off and borne along at a fearful speed. If such were

the effects of the storm in the fields, it will be easy to imagine the havoc wrought amongst the slightly built sheds in which the slaves were housed: constructed principally of timber, they were swept away long before the hurricane had reached its height, so that when Kennee and his companion reached the spot where the huts had stood, they found only an open space, from which even the debris had been carried away. There was no need of a guide to direct their course, for the only buildings now standing were such portions of the sugar mills and of Don Diego's house as were built of masonry. When the hurricane burst upon the island it had rather aided than retarded the advance of the two adventurers, but as it continued to sweep round the compass, they were at length compelled to creep on the ground, and assist themselves forward by the long grass.

After many narrow escapes they reached the house; it appeared, however, to be deserted by its inmates, for no one opposed their entrance; nor could any sound be heard except that made by the elements, or the cracking of the walls and timbers. It was built on the declivity of a hill, and on the side by which they approached was entered on the top or second story;

this they examined, room after room, but found nothing to raise their drooping hopes. Perhaps, after all, she was not there; she was a slave, and might have been sold to some other master; or, what was more probable, the hopes of deliverance had not been strong enough to support her in the protracted combat she must have had to sustain with the uncontrolled tyranny and licentiousness of those among whom her lot was cast: such were the thoughts that now raged, wild as the storm, in Kennee's mind. Strange it was that they had never till then occurred to him; but now they came armed with double terrors, and the confidence that had hitherto animated him was all but gone. There was one small sleeping-room they had not yet examined; there they found female attire but nothing to prove that it was hers; and they were in the act of leaving it when Kennee exclaimed, "I have found her, I have found her!" Allah returned, expecting to see Myha before him; but found only Kennee, who held in his hand what appeared to be a bit of cord, upon which he was gazing as though it could reveal both past and future; but it was only bringing again scenes with which he was familiar; for he held in his hand some of the grass that had waved in his native valley, and been

nourished by the stream that flowed through the once peaceful Fellatah village.

When Kennee was borne a captive from the ruins of Allaroonah, his guards had bound up a wound in his arm with a wisp of grass from the margin of the rivulet: from this he afterwards platted a bracelet which he fixed round Myha's wrist. This the slave-dealers had not thought it worth their while to remove, and Myha had often said she would not part with it; and thus it proved her presence. With hope renewed, they again commenced their search: descending to the lower story they examined every room, but found only the furniture, with which the storm was already at sport. Whilst thus engaged, a portion of the house, not that part in which they were, unable to stand against the force of the hurricane, came down with a crash that, for a moment, deadened every other sound. Kennee looked round for his companion, but the clouds of dust hid them from each other; nor could his voice be heard in the general uproar.

At that moment, as if to accumulate the horrors that surrounded him, he heard a shriek such as the one which had rung in his ears on the dreadful morn when he lost Allaroonah and his bride. To many it would have sounded as the spirit of the storm exulting over

the disruption of nature; to him, heart-rending as it was, it brought joy, for he knew that she who he came to save was near, and called for his aid, nor called in vain as once she did. The frequent flashes of lightning enabled him to proceed in the direction whence the shriek he had heard came; and thus guided he found the entrance to a passage, at the further end of which hung a lamp that shed its dim light through the dusky atmosphere. Without pausing he entered, and came suddenly upon a large chamber cut in the rock, and in which the borrowed light was just sufficient to show him the deeds of blood there enacting.

On the floor lay a figure in the dress of a planter, and near him a naked sword that had fallen from his relaxed grasp; while blood flowed from a wound in his side. Close to him was Myha, kneeling, and partially shielding the fallen man with her graceful form; one hand rested on his body, the other was grasped by a fiendish looking negro whose uplifted dagger was about to shed the heart's-blood of one at least of his victims: Kennee's arm, however, was quicker than the murderer's, who seemed to be feasting his eyes upon the terror of the lovely being he imagined to be so absolutely in his power, and before he could consum-

mate his purpose he reeled head-long to the ground. Myha had seen the dagger poised in the air, and as it fell, she became unconscious that its descent was her deliverance and not her death; for Kennee's sword had passed through the ruffian's body, and the groans and imprecations of the dying man mingled harshly with the roar of the tempest which the intervening passage in some measure subdued.

Kennee at once recognised in the features of the white man he who had so imperiously carried off Myha to be his slave, and the remembrance of that event brought with it a train of thoughts which he could not repress: "what and if he has made her worse than his slave," said he. His reflections, however, were stayed by the appearance of two or three slaves, who crept from the dark corners of the room, whither they had fled for safety, and now came forth bewailing their master's fate. In the meantime Allah had found his way to the chamber, and whilst Kennee was endeavouring to restore Myha to consciousness, he examined the countenances of the two men who lay on the ground: that of the white man was unknown to him, the other was familiar, but yet he could not call to mind whether it was that of a friend or a foe.

The sound of his voice caused Kennee for the first time to avert his steadfast gaze from Myha's face, when his eyes met those of the dying negro. A moment sufficed to reveal the treachery that had been enacted, and the dreadful fate that must have been Myha's had not he been there to save her. He beheld in the would-be-murderer Nar-Chez the Dahoman, and Nar-Chez had recognised in the avenger "The young lion of Allaroonah."

"What," exclaimed Kennee, as he stood over him, "hast thou escaped so long the punishment of thy life-long crime? Would to God I had sooner been the slayer of the man who has dealt thus from his youth. Little did we think, Myha, when I said, 'except to defend thy life or mine own, my arm shall not be lifted against him,' that I should indeed have to do it."

Nar-Chez spoke not, but lay for some time with clenched hands, the torment of both body and mind being distinctly visible. At length his face assumed a look of malicious triumph, as though the revenge he was about to take was sweet, even in death. "Dahomy," said he, "the destroyer of thy nation, is more powerful and glorious than when Allaroonah was trampled down by the irresistible Amazons. We con-

quered you with women, but have sent our warriors against Ashantee, who by this time will have placed their feet on the necks of her chiefs, and carried them to Abomey to be sacrificed on the graves of our ancestors; as for thee, if thou art come to snatch her who is not yet thine from the power of the white man, thou comest too late, the sweet fruit hath been long at his lips, but the husk lies there and will be greedily devoured by such a slave as thee."

Nar-Chez could say no more, for death put in his strong claim.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Oh, she is true as truth itself can be."

ROGERS.

KENNEE watched the struggles of the enemy as if there were a charm in that terrible scene he could not resist; to a looker-on it might have been supposed he was well pleased with the sight, but it was not so. True, his eyes were directed towards the dying man, but he saw him only as one in a trance would. The words uttered by Nar-Chez had, in a moment, blasted the hope and toil of years. "If," thought he, "the sweet fruit has indeed been at another's lips than mine own, I cannot take the husk, lovely as it still is;" and bending over Nar-Chez, he said, in accents of despair, "recal those words, and I will forgive thee all—I will no longer call thee enemy, but the best friend I have." He spoke, however, to the ear of death—the words were beyond recal. After a few moments' pause a calmness almost superhuman seemed to possess him;

and he turned and looked upon her he had loved so long and so truly.

"Said I not, Myha, I should come and bring thee freedom? Thou didst believe me once—oh that thou hadst had strength to endure to the end, and not have given thy love to the man who bought it—not with his blood but money. Now freedom will have lost its charm; for as long as the mind is fettered, it is only a mockery to free the body." There was no reproach but only sorrow in his tone as he uttered these words; and turning to Allah, he bade him stay where he was until morning, and then join him on the beach. "She must not know that I have been here—that I have seen her: and if she asks about me say I have not been heard of; or, rather, say I am dead; would it were the truth, and then she at least might, perhaps, be happy for a few years longer: God only knows what has brought her to it. Look to this white man also; as for the cursed Dahoman, he is already gone to his account."

He was about to leave the place when he cast his eyes again upon Myha; he could not resist the impulse to kneel once more at her side; there were still the well remembered features; the countenance that had

ever smiled when he was nigh; the joy of freedom and the hope of slavery; the star that had guided him from the mines of Brazil, and through the battle-field of Hayti, that he might give her something beyond freedom: but he saw himself like Esau, who came in from the chase and found another in possession of his blessing. He listened to her low breathing until a sigh warned him to be gone, and he left the chamber half mad with the torrent of wretchedness that overwhelmed him, for the calmness with which he had looked upon Myha had vanished; but instead of flying at once from the place, he seated himself in the gallery. No gleam of hope, however, presented itself to his mind. If, thought he, she still were true, why had she laid aside the remembrance of former days? The Spaniard must be more to her than a master, and she more than a slave, or she would not have placed herself between him and the dagger of the assassin.

He rose, and was proceeding towards the entrance of the passage, when a terrific crash arrested his steps; it was the fall of that portion of the building which had hitherto resisted the force of the hurricane, but was now brought to the ground by an earthquake. Kennee, half suffocated by the dust, found the mouth of the

passage blocked up with stones and rubbish: in a state of distraction he toiled like one who was endeavouring to escape from some impending danger, but he toiled in vain, and was compelled to relinquish the attempt.

The trembling of the earth was felt more distinctly by the inmates of the subterranean chamber than by those on the surface of the ground; and it seemed as though all nature were moved at the presence of God. The floor undulated like the surface of a ruffled lake, whilst the sides and roof cracked and gave way in many places: it was enough to stay the spirits of the dying, much less to free those of the living, who were merely bowed down by an oppression of misery. Such was the effect upon Myha, who uttered a cry of terror at the sensation, and the sight of the rocking of the chamber; but scarcely had her voice ceased to vibrate ere the tremor subsided, and all else became lost in the crash of the falling masonry. Cut off as they now were from the outer world, the sweeping of the hurricane became dull and heavy, and broke upon their ears like the sound of the waters to the venturous miner who follows the rich vein of metal under the ocean; and the lamp burnt with a dim light, making the gloom of the chamber more complete. Myha had again sunk on the

ground, and when she unclosed her eyes Allah was leaning over her.

"Be gone, thou vile Dahoman," she exclaimed, her eyes flashing with indignation.

"I am not Nar-Chez, but Allah, the Allaroonahan."

"Nay," replied she, "Allah was a warrior, thou art a slave. But if thou be Allah tell me where the king is?"

"The young lion, overcome by the multitude of his foes, has perished in the hands of the white man."

"There, I knew thou wert not Allah," cried she, with a wild unearthly laugh. "I was seated at my loom until sunset, and Kennee told me how all his enemies fled before the flames, and fell into the hands of his warriors, only one escaped; and when Kennee left to return to Allaroonah he came to me with a dagger in his hand; but why should I tell this to any but Kennee," and she hid her face in her hands and wept. Presently she looked around and perceived some one standing at the doorway, "see, see," she exclaimed, grasping Allah's arm, "he is there, he is coming again—if thou art Allah, why dost thou not slay him?"

It was Kennee: her language, tone of voice, and wild look filled him with horror; he could scarce believe the being before him to be the gentle, patient Myha of

former days; her sweetness of expression was gone, whilst her eyes, from which for him only love had beamed, met his with the piercing glance of an eagle; passion had marred every grace, and anger sat ill upon a countenance so lovely in repose. "I am Kennee," said he, advancing towards her, "oh, do not look upon me as one who comes to reproach thee; I come but to say farewell." He took her burning hand in his, but she shrunk from him with a look of terror, as she exclaimed, "I have only to cry out, and the Young Lion will be upon thee."

She then became more calm, talked of Allaroonah, of her flocks and her father; and turning to Kennee, who had seated himself beside her, with a smile of joy she laid her hand on his and whispered, whilst the blood mantled her once more lovely cheeks, "Did you my father love so well as Kennee, or am I more blessed than she who gave me birth?"

"God grant thou may be as blest as she, my child," said he, and as he kissed her forehead a tear mingled with her own, for reason was again returning, and sinking on his breast a placid sleep stole over her. How like is this to innocence, thought he, as he gently laid her on the ground.

While this scene was enacting Don Diego, who had fainted from loss of blood, recovered sufficiently to look around him; at first he supposed an insurrection of the slaves had taken place, and gave himself up for lost; but he was quickly undeceived by observing one of them lying dead, and others standing quietly by. Kennee was too much absorbed in listening to Myha's incoherent words to notice him. Allah, however, addressed him, saying he need not be afraid. as there was only one traitor, and he had already received the reward of his treachery.

Don Diego, who spoke in French, asked what he and his companion did there? Allah replied they were friends, as he would see ere long. He then set the slaves to work at clearing from the passage the ruins that blocked it up. This done they found themselves in the open air, the house having been entirely levelled with the ground. Though the storm still raged it had evidently spent its fury, and ceased entirely about dawn, being followed by a dead calm. A cloudless sky, cheered by the glorious sun, offered a marked contrast to the scene of desolation and death it disclosed. As there was no place of shelter to which Myha or the Spaniard could be removed, Kennee remained with

them in the vaulted chamber, despatching Allah to the beach to learn the fate of their companions, and inform them of their leader's safety. He chose this course as, now that the first impulse was past, he could not dash away the hopes and longing of years without learning from Myha's lips the truth or falsehood of what Nar-Chez had said.

Allah had not been long gone ere the old Englishman entered, and having ascertained that his master was recovering, he turned his attention to Myha. As he seemed to take a great interest in her, Kennee soon drew the old man into conversation, and learned the story of their first acquaintance; and he was proceeding with his narrative when Myha appeared to be awaking. As Kennee was afraid that his presence so suddenly revealed might cause a return of her fever, he drew the old man into the gloom and bade him discourse of Allaroonah and its young king, and hint at the possibility of his soon being with her. The Englishman had already suspected the stranger to be he of whose arrival Myha had at one time so often and so confidently spoken, and as she was now awake he asked no explanation but seated himself by her. There was, however, no occasion for him to introduce the subject the

stranger had desired, for her first words were, "I have had a most delicious dream, in which my native valley appeared before me just as it was when all was peace, and before the sword of the Dahoman and the gold of the white man had slain or enslaved its happy people. There, too, were my maidens, occupied as was their wont; nor was the picture incomplete: he also was by my side; his hand held mine, and I heard him speak words of joy and love. Oh, that I had never more awoke!"

"Perhaps sleep had not so far overcome you," said the old man, "but that things of real occurrence were mixed with your dream. A stranger, one of your own people, has been here."

"A stranger, and of my own people! But no, it cannot be, I will not deceive myself with the thought. He must have been one of those who were taken captive. Was he an abject slave, or did his look bespeak him one who was fitter to command than to cringe to another's word?"

"Though dressed as a slave his mien was noble."

"Oh, say not so; I will not think it could be Kennee or he would not have left me. But why that look; dost thou know for a truth that it was he?"

"He told me not his name, but he is here, and if it be not he thou desirest to see lay not the blame on me."

As the old man spoke Kennee emerged from the gloom, and—but how would it be possible to portray their emotions; and to describe what was visible alone were as if one examined the outside only of some beautiful casket in which lay concealed jewels of countless price—it was the realization of the hopes of years. Though there was still the same sweetness in her countenance, and nobleness in his, as in former years, yet the glow of youthful beauty, as it appeared before the blast of adversity had swept over it, was gone. The old man was the first to break the silence, "She always spoke of this meeting as certain, and though I did not say so, I thought it never would come."

Myha disengaged herself from Kennee's arms, and taking her old friend by the hand she replied with a smile, "Said I not that death alone would prevent his coming. God, in his goodness, allowed you to be my protector, for had it not been so he had come too late."

These words recalled to Kennee's mind the Daho-man's dying curse, which the ecstacy of the moment had banished, and pointing his naked sword to Don Diego's breast he exclaimed, "I have saved thy life once, not

knowing thou hadst deprived my Myha of her honour, but commend thy soul to God, for the moment is come in which all thy crimes shall be expiated."

The Spaniard knew his utter inability to cope with his adversary, but the drowning man will clutch at the sea-weed that floats by, and he was about to grasp the blade when Myha sprang forward, and pushing aside the weapon exclaimed, "He sought but what he imagined he had a right to demand from his slave, but as he obtained it not, why should he die?"

"Obtained it not! Then the Dahoman lied unto me, and his treachery ended only with his life. My Myha's countenance is truth itself; I will not doubt her words, the joy of believing is too great to permit me. Strange it was that the language of an enemy should make me forget the strength of her love." Sheathing his sword he offered his hand to the Spaniard, "Accept, said he, the plea of one who acted under the impression that he had been deprived of his greatest treasure, and saw before him the man who was said to have robbed him of it."

Don Diego hesitated to accept the proffered friendship, when the Englishman joined their hands saying, "This man saved thy life, and if he required it again

it was not for himself, but to revenge her whose hopes he thought thou hadst blasted."

"But who are you?" said Don Diego.

"I am now a General in the army of the Emperor of Hayti; once I was, and should still have been, the King of Allaroonah, had not the monarch of Dahomy, incited by lust and the gold of the white man, overcome me, not by the superior bravery of his warriors, but by their numbers and his own double-dealing. My object in coming here was to carry off my bride from him who by the laws of God has no right to detain her."

"Then I see before me the Young Lion of Allaroonah," replied the Spaniard, as he gazed intently at the commanding countenance of the African, "and the slave girl I have so long possessed is the heroine of that bloody and disastrous war. I was present and heard your story. What immediately followed the fall of your town, namely, that one of the captive maidens had chosen slavery rather than meet the embrace of so powerful a king as that of Dahomy, I looked upon as one of your fables only, but now I see that it was true."

"Were it not so," replied Kennee, "we had not been here."

"Well might I not prevail," rejoined Don Diego, "when the proffered position of a king's wife had been despised. Yesterday I would rather have parted with half my slaves than with her; now, however, I give her freely to the only man worthy of a prize so noble."

"I cannot receive her as a slave," said Kennee. "I intended to seize her as a warrior's bride; but as it is otherwise ordered, her freedom and honour must be proclaimed before my people, as a testimony to them that she has remained true to their king and nation."

Such a high regard for reputation in one who had been sold as a slave, not a little surprised Don Diego. "Had I been so blessed as thou, I would have received the prize for its present worth alone, nor cared to look back at the past."

Kennee saw the trouble that marked Myha's countenance at these words, and taking her by the hand he said, "I doubt not the purity of my newly-found treasure, nor am I become insensible to that beauty which has been the charm of my whole life, but it was for my people that I asked this boon."

"I knew," said Myha, "and honoured the motive, and was overjoyed when the request was made; it was

not your words but his that gave me pain." Then turning to the Spaniard she knelt at his feet, "Grant," said she, "that I may be rendered worthy to receive respect from the followers of him who is now my lord, and I will ever pray God to preserve this island from such a scourge as that with which He has just visited it."

Don Diego half repented of having parted with his lovely slave, whom he doubted not he had the right, and knew he had the power, to keep, as also to seize the persons of the two Africans. But when he reflected upon his narrow escape from death, his better genius prevailed: "It shall be as you wish it," said he, "from this moment, however, thou art no longer a slave."

Allah now returned to the chamber. He had succeeded in forming a tent out of the spars and sails of some of the stranded boats, and thither Don Diego was removed. Kennee ordered another to be prepared for Myha, whither she retired to seek that repose of which she stood so much in need. Sleep, however, after the exciting events of the last few hours, was long ere it visited her eyelids, and then only to repeat in dreams that which in the reality had far surpassed the sweetest vision.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I wonder whence that tear came, when I smiled
In the production on't."

MASSINGER.

KENNEE, overcome with fatigue and anxious watching, threw himself on the ground outside Myha's tent, and in a moment slept the deep sleep of a happy man. It was past mid-day when he awoke; but only half aroused, he again closed his eyes to muse; for if what he had then seen was a reality, and not a delusion of the drowsy senses, all else must have passed in a dream, and the seeming transactions of years been compressed into the space of a mid-day slumber. Myha was seated at his side, as she was wont in their happy days; nay, his very hand was clasped in hers; whilst, standing at a little distance, was Allah, the best tried friend of his youth, gazing upon them with a joy he would not have shown had they been captives. This, then, must be the reality. "I have slept long," said he, starting up. "We must go to Allaroonah.

Myha; the king, my father, will be waiting for us." This was spoken half in jest, half in earnest; but Myha supposed his mind was affected by the flood of happiness that had burst upon them.

"Allaroonah, and the king," exclaimed she, in accents that bespoke alarm.

Her fears, however, were of short continuance. "Then Allaroonah is destroyed," said he; "and we have been captives—yea, have borne the name of slaves."

"Slaves we have been in body, but never in mind," replied Myha, "and having escaped its terrors, may we not thank God for its being the means of bringing us both to Him?"

If she had any doubts as to Kennee's belief in God, his answer at once dispelled them.

In the evening Don Diego was so far recovered as to be able to undertake the fatigue of being carried over the plantation in a litter; what a scene there met his anxious gaze. Yesterday he had been the proud possesser of fields laden with the choicest gifts of a tropical clime, to look upon which must have gladdened the hearts of the very slaves whose toil had assisted nature's handy-work; how much more then of him who had already counted the gain. But He who gave

the fertilizing shower and gentle breeze, could also send the torrent and wild tornado. This and the tragic events of the previous night had wrought a great change in the heart of the Spainard, and he looked upon the scene with more composure than might have been expected.

Not only were the crops for that year destroyed, but, in some description of produce, for several years yet to come. Plants, such as the coffee, cotton, and others of a pliable nature, that were not torn up, were rendered useless by having been swept round the surface of the soil. The habitations of the slaves had been swept away, as we have already related, before the hurricane attained its full strength; and as many of the poor beings were missing, it was concluded they must have fled to the sugar-house, and perished when the earthquake took place; search was accordingly made there, and the supposition found to be too true.

Kennee had accompanied Don Diego in his tour of inspection, and he and his little band rendered every assistance in their power. Being anxious to learn the history of the trials with which Myha had been so long struggling, he returned to her tent, and passed the remainder of the day in listening to her narration. We

cannot follow the now joyous Myha in her story; or give in her own words—words of passionate eloquence—the state of her feelings whilst enduring some of the trials which she could not even then regard without a shudder, but in which she had once been an actor; but must leave to the imagination that which was spoken for Kennee's ear alone, and proceed to relate that of which Myha was ignorant.

We left her at the moment when her fate was closely, though unconsciously, mingled with that of her bitterest foe. Nar-Chez resolved from the first moment of his discovery to become possessed, by some means or other, of the prize which had once before been so suddenly snatched from his grasp by the more powerful hand of one who was no longer there to save her. He watched every opportunity to feast his eyes upon his intended victim, and this he contented himself with doing for a long while; not knowing how to accomplish his purpose, his cowardly heart shrunk from the danger, and thus time passed without anything being effected.

Spying and plotting now occupied so much of his time, that he neglected his duty, was disgraced, and ultimately flogged by order of Don Diego. This added fuel to his already heated temper, and his master was

henceforth associated with his schemes of revenge. The plan he finally fixed upon was to embrace the first favourable chance that might present itself for concealing himself in his master's house, and having done so, to murder him, and then set fire to the premises, carrying off Myha during the confusion that would ensue. He would then proceed to the harbour, and taking the boat that was most convenient, endeavour to escape to some one of the neighbouring islands. The dismay caused by the impending hurricane offered a good opportunity for carrying out this scheme, and accordingly at the commencement of the confusion he concealed himself in the vaulted chamber, not with the expectation that this retreat would be chosen by his victims, but because it was best suited to his own purpose. The issue has already been narrated.

Amongst the slaves on Don Diego's estate was another Dahoman besides Nar-Chez. This man had been on the island only a few weeks. Kennee found him out, hoping to learn some of the events that had taken place at Abomey since his own departure thence. It appeared from his statement that the permanent treaty of peace concluded at the time of the last invasion of Allaroonah, between the king of Dahomy and

his royal brother of Ashantee, lasted only so long as it suited the purpose of the former to abide by it. For some of the villages protected by his ally having been asked for at the customs in the usual manner, were at length demanded, and given up for a slave hunt. As this was conducted with the usual secrecy observed on such expeditions, the victims of it were either sold as slaves, or sacrificed over the graves of the king's ancestors, before the Ashantee monarch became aware of the breach of faith committed by his royal brother.

Ever since then a war had been carried on between the two kingdoms, in which the Ashantees were hard pressed by their Dahoman enemies. The narrator being taken prisoner, was sold to the white men, and though a slave he still showed no small degree of pride at having once been styled a Dahoman warrior. He predicted the subjugation of all the surrounding states to Abomey, not excepting Ashantee, which, he said, must ultimately fall, unless assisted by the English, who held possession of the sea coast, and could fight well, though not so well as the Dahomans. In enumerating the many victories of his countrymen, he dwelt with pride upon that gained over the Allaroonahans, whom he designated as a nation of fierce mountain lions, exaggerat-

ing their numbers in order that their extinction might seem the more glorious to the Dahoman arms. "Well is it for Abomey," said he, in concluding this eulogy on his nation, "that Allaroonah has been blotted from the abodes of man, for had she now been able to join Ashantee in the war, there would be fewer captives to sacrifice at our customs."

Kennee smiled. "Supposing there were a few of these mountain lions still left," said he, "would not their roar strike terror into the heart of any Dahoman who heard it."

"Not unless the Young Lion was among them, for then many warriors would join themselves to him; but this can never be, he is either dead or a slave."

"How knowest thou what may or what may not be?" said Kennee, assuming the expression he wore when, standing in the midst of the Dahoman thousands, he had defied their impotent rage; "the Young Lion of Allaroonah is alive and no slave; his voice may yet be heard at the gates of Abomey."

"How is this?" exclaimed the slave, recognising Kennee; "The king of Allaroonah, and not only free, but wearing the war-dress of the white man!" He had on his General's uniform. "Had you not been the enemy

of Dahomy, I should have thought you were a great warrior."

"I was the friend of Dahomy until your monarch forced me to become its enemy."

Kennee's thoughts were drawn by this conversation to his native valley, and in a subsequent one with the same slave, he learnt for the first time that a considerable number of his former subjects had escaped during the sacking of the town to the mountain fastnesses, where, having eluded those sent after them, they were supposed to be still living. This was what he could not have hoped to hear, because he never imagined that any Allaroonahan had escaped death or slavery.

He still remained with his small company at Porto Rico, assisting Don Diego to recover something from the general wreck, in return for Myha's liberty, which had been formally made out and proclaimed. One day there were assembled together Don Diego, Kennee, Myha, and Allah, when the discourse fell upon Allaroonah. Myha, who was now united to Kennee by the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, sat beside her lord; she sighed as a tear escaped from her dark eyes, which, bent down, were hidden by their long lashes.

"Why does my Myha mourn, when she should be gay?" asked Kennee.

"While I weep," replied she, "my heart is full of joy; but when you spoke of Allaroonah I thought of my father and my mother and our own lovely valley, their now lonely resting place; would it might be ours too."

Kennee made no reply, her words had given a sort of reality to the vague idea that had flitted across his mind since he learnt that his nation was not entirely extirpated.

Myha raised her eyes, wondering at his continued silence, and long did he gaze into them as though they were magical glasses in which he was reading her own and his future destiny. "It may be," said he, at length breaking silence, "and if God permit, it shall be. There is yet among her mountains a band of warriors who have never called the Dahoman 'victor,' nor bowed beneath the yoke of the white man."

Myha was now afraid of her own wish; when she uttered it, it was not with the intention of urging its accomplishment, but she had set in motion a genius as daring as it was noble, and therefore it was that she trembled for the future.

Not so Allah; he embraced the idea with the same spirit that animated him when, in the assemblage of chiefs, he drew the lot that gave to him alone the honour of sharing with his king and friend the dangers of the Dahoman capital. He knelt down, and kissing Myha's hand, saluted her "Queen of Allaroonah."

"Oh! do not deceive yourself and me," she exclaimed, "by representing this as posible; may we not bring down the displeasure of God by seeking greater blessings than we deserve?"

"View it not in so narrow a sense, Myha," replied Kennee; "think of the hundreds, yea, thousands, that might be made wise and happy; of the glorious monument we should raise to the goodness and power of our God, whose name would then be worshipped by those now living there, sunk in the degrading superstition of the Fetish."

"It should then be the valley of the free," rejoined Myha, already imbued with Kennee's enthusiasm; "a refuge for such as we have been; but are we not indulging in imaginations too delicious to realize."

Kennee answered not; he was again lost in deep thought, which none dared to interrupt, as they knew that some great resolve must be the issue; but the

event was too important for its working to be so rapidly decided upon; nor was it until the following morning that he announced his intention of sending Allah to sound the rest of the Allaroonahans as to their wish to leave Hayti and return to their native valley; though, judging from the manner in which the proposition was received by those he had with him, it seemed an almost needless precaution.

Now that he had been sometime removed from the exciting scene of his recent exploits, he could the better review the social position of the Haytians; and in this he was reluctantly compelled to confess that the glowing picture he had drawn in his mind, previous to his short sojourn amongst them, was all but effaced by a practical acquaintance with them. Instead of the watchwords of liberty and equality everywhere heard and acted upon, he found the whole community divided into two classes almost as distinct as those of Brazil: the one revelling in pride and licentiousness; the other ignorant, and slaves in everything but the name, whilst idleness reigned triumphant over all, allowing one of the most lovely and fertile spots on the globe to be the theatre of many a scene of famine and wretchedness, as well as rapine and bloodshed. By reflections such as

these, he was brought to think more seriously of the projected return to Africa, and spent all his leisure time in endeavouring to devise means for carrying out the scheme.

This had, at the first blush, appeared an easy matter; but the more he turned it over in his mind, the more difficult it seemed, and whatever plans he might have formed, they were all abondoned on the return of Allah from Hayti: the intelligence brought by him having put a new feature on the state of affairs. This being Allah's second voyage from Porto Rico to Hayti, he was enabled to make at once for the bay on the shores of which the Allaroonahan settlement had been formed. Upon rounding the wooded promontery that formed the western side of the secluded harbour, he and his companions observed to their no small surprise, that the village was in ruins. Suspecting treachery, or conjecturing that another insurrection of the people had taken place, they did not cross the bay, but ran the boat up a creek, and concealed themselves in the woods. After nightfall, Allah with only one companion landed near the village, where they intended to remain until the following evening, when they were to be taken off again by the boat.

When daylight came, they examined the ruins very cautiously, but could find no signs that any of their countrymen were there; one thing was apparent—the work of destruction had not been their deed, or they would have spared many things that now lay strewed among the ruins, wantonly broken, or half consumed by the fire. After a long and fruitless search they retired into the bush, when, perceiving themselves to be followed by two persons, they immediately gave the private signal of their nation, which was answered. These men proved to be Allaroonahnns, who gave Allah an account of the events that had caused the destruction of the village, the substance of which was as follows:—Not long after Kennee's departure from Nootah, an order came from the emperor, that all the Allaroonahans were to repair to the capital forthwith, bringing with them their families and effects. The suddenness of this mandate, coming as it did just when their chiefs were absent, caused them to act with caution, so that instead of complying with it, they sent a deputation to court to inquire the reason for so strange a movement. Here the finesse displayed by the deputies would not have disgraced European diplomatists; they discovered a deep laid conspiracy, which taxed their ingenuity to defeat.

This conspiracy had begun amongst the nobles, who, jealous of the fame acquired by the stranger, and the honours bestowed upon him, only waited an opportunity to poison the mind of the Emperor against him; they, therefore, availed themselves of Kennee's absence to represent to their royal master that his conduct was that of a traitor; and at length they went so far as to say that he had proceeded to the Island of Guadalope in order to induce the French to make a descent upon Hayti. It was soon proved that he and some of his people had left the island, and this being considered proof conclusive, without waiting for further evidence, he was declared a traitor to the empire; judgment of death was pronounced against him, and all the effects of himself and his followers forfeited to the Emperor. It was resolved to decoy the whole of the Allaroonahans who still remained in Hayti, away from their village: hence the order to proceed to the capital, which it was never intended they should reach, large bodies of men being stationed in ambush to fire upon them whilst threading the defiles of the mountains, for the Haytians were afraid to attack in the open field men whose valour had inspired a respect for the name of Allaroonah.

The deputies being discreet men showed no tokens of distrust, and appeared perfectly satisfied with the reasons assigned for their removal to some other part of the kingdom. Accordingly they were dismissed with the understanding that upon their arrival at Nootah the whole body of the Allaroonahans would set out for the chief city. When they returned to the village a council was held, in which, after much deliberation, it was agreed that they should seize a brig of six guns belonging to the Haytian government, then lying in the bay, and embarking their women and children, make the best of their way to the British island of Jamaica. Then came the question, how were their absent countrymen to find them out? Had they known where the island of Porto Rico was, they would still have been at a loss to know in what part of it to search for them.

Two young men, who had been Kennee's companions in former years, volunteered to remain behind, and conceal themselves in the woods until the return of their chief. These plans had all succeeded, and they saw their companions depart, leaving them alone amidst their enemies. The Haytians were not long in discovering the flight of their intended victims, when, as

we have seen, they burnt or destroyed everything that had belonged to the Allaroonahans. This affair banished any desire Kennee might have retained to settle in Hayti, for to the many vices he had seen common among its inhabitants, it had as a nation proved itself treacherous and ungrateful. He was overjoyed when he learnt that the island to which his countrymen had fled for protection was part of the British empire, nor was Myha less delighted at the prospect of treading, for the first time, a land in which slavery was unknown, except in memory, and there meeting with many to whom the name of Allaroonah was equally dear as to herself, for Kennee had resolved to follow his countrymen at once to the Island of Jamaica.

Upon their departure from Porto Rico, Don Diego loaded them with presents, and dismissed them with a salute from all the guns he could muster. Old Jack, the English sailor, requested permission to follow the fortunes of her whom he had served even when a slave. As Myha returned his friendship, his request was at once acceded to, and he might now be seen in attendance, ready to protect her in case of danger. As he had frequently sailed in those seas, the felucca was placed under his charge. Their voyage was speedily

accomplished, and without affording any incident worthy of note, the weather being fine, and the sea only slightly agitated by a gentle breeze that bore them to the shores of freedom. They made the island of Jamaica at one of the headlands off Port Morant, and entering the bay, displayed the ensign of Allaroonah: a young lion with its paws on the neck of a wolf, which they had carried in their recent battles in Hayti; but it was not recognised, nor did they learn any tidings of their companions.

Coasting eastward, they at length arrived at Port Royal Harbour, which they entered. In the midst of all that crowd of shipping, it seemed impossible that the Allaroonahan signal displayed on their little craft could be recognised by their companions; but the eyes of those who are waiting in anxiety the coming of friends, are quicker in detecting their approach than on ordinary occasions. They neared a brig that lay at anchor in the middle of the bay—not a sound issued from her—a few persons were gazing over her bulwarks, or moving listlessly about, apparently without object: there was no bustle of arrival, or preparation to depart. Suddenly all is changed; hundreds of human beings crowd her deck, her rigging, her spars; no disturbed

ant, hill ever presented a more animated scene, whilst the name of Allaroonah and its chief resounded from shore to shore, and ceased not until Kennee was amongst the joyous throng. Myha, meanwhile, remained in the boat; she remembered the feeling that had once swayed, with a bitter rancour, some of the brave defenders of Allaroonah, causing them to accuse her of being the author of their misfortunes. "Perhaps," thought she, "all who had harboured this sentiment had not gone over to the Dahoman camp; and if so, and there be any such here, my presence may create discord in this small band of patriots."

But when the first burst of joy at the reappearance of their chief was over, Kennee presented to them Myha, merely styling her his bride. Allah, however, could not contain himself, but kneeling down, saluted her before them all as Queen of Allaroonah. His unpremeditated act fired every heart with an enthusiasm strong as his own. Each warrior came forward to kiss her hand, whilst many of her own sex, not content with so formal a reception, embraced their lovely queen—calling on God to protect her from further evils—and thus filling her with a joy that no other language could have conveyed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Thou fight'st
The battle of thy native land; obtain
A conquest, and the sceptre will be thine."
EURIPIDES.

KENNEE was not a little troubled when he learned that his countrymen had incurred the suspicion of the authorities of the island. The brig was anchored within range of the guns of a man-of-war, whose commander had orders to fire upon them should they attempt to go on shore or leave the harbour without permission. Whilst he still listened to their story a boat with a midshipman came alongside the Haytian brig, demanding the cause of the tumult. Kennee expressed a desire to be taken on board the British ship; nor was it without a feeling of awe that the African warrior ascended the towering height of the white man's floating citadel; but, conscious of the justness of his cause, he hesitated not to trust himself

in the power of the sons of a nation that had always proved herself ready to defend the weak against the strong. Re-assuming the kingly demeanour, which though long laid aside could yet ennoble a form that nature seemed to have created to command, he conducted himself throughout the interview with the British officer in such a manner as to convince the open-hearted sailor that he was what he represented himself to be; his story, too, agreed in every point with that given by his fellow-countrymen.

During the day the commander, accompanied by the governor, according to appointment, returned Kennee's visit, and, had any doubts remained in the minds of the British officers as to the truth of what they had heard from the lips of the strangers, their reception on board the Haytian brig would have dispelled them. Kennee now wore the graceful dress of an Allaroonahan chief; by his side was a richly mounted sword, and in the scarf that bound his waist a pair of elegant pistols, the gift of the Emperor of Hayti. He came to the ship's side to receive his illustrious guests, who had no sooner stepped on deck than the guns fired a salute, and the men on duty presented arms. Astonished at all they heard and saw,

the Englishmen were next conducted to the quarter-deck, where their surprise attained a height that almost made them forget the etiquette to be observed, and the cause of this may easily be imagined.

Myha's attire was similar in design to that she was described as wearing upon the occasion of Nar-Chez's first appearance in the valley of Allaroonah, when he came as ambassador from the King of Dahomy. These garments were the gift of Don Diego. The British officers made a low obeisence as they kissed the hand of the Allaroonahan queen, though not her rank alone purchased her this homage; nor can we censure the feeling of delight that possessed her heart, and which, as she had not been taught to conceal her emotions, was easily discernible in her beauteous countenance, at the respect paid to one of Africa's daughters by the illustrious, or, as she had so long loved to call them, the good white men.

Kennee and Myha were provided with suitable apartments on shore, and the whole of the Allaroonahans being shortly after removed to an empty store, in order that the brig might be sent back to Hayti, to be delivered to the Emperor upon his paying an indemnity to the Allaroonahans for the loss they had suffered at

his hands. Their story was now rapidly circulated from mouth to mouth, and when it became known that they were about to return to the interior of Africa, and found a Christian kingdom there, the most intense interest was excited: the religious bodies united their efforts to obtain subscriptions to enable them to carry out their design, and thus a large sum was realized. Still, without the aid of the authorities all must have failed, so great were the difficulties to be encountered.

Kennee, however, was never disheartened; Myha's presence cheered him amid all, and bright visions of happy days to be spent in their native valley lured him on, always placing hope in the vacant niche where otherwise despair might haply have been found. It would be tedious to enumerate the troubles with which he had to contend before affairs began to assume a promising appearance, but when at length the means of transport were obtained, all else seemed easy of accomplishment. Two empty slave ships, captured off the coast of Cuba, were about to be sent to Sierre Leone; these were placed at his disposal, and afforded ample accommodation for all his company. The crews had orders to proceed at once to the Gold Coast, and land the Allaroonahans at one of the British forts, in

order that they might remain under its protection until they could advance into the interior.

Numerous presents were sent them, consisting principally of arms and agricultural implements, and the spare time during which the preparations for departure were being made was spent in acquiring a knowledge of their uses. By permission of their officers, some of the soldiers took considerable pains in training the Allaroonahans in the European mode of warfare, and soon rendered them a very efficient body of men. Amongst their other purchases or presents were six small field guns; these they were taught to serve, to limber and unlimber; Kennee himself not disdaining to receive the like instruction.

At length everything was ready for the embarkation of the adventurers, upon which occasion the English troops were under arms, and every military compliment within the power of the colonial government to grant was paid them. Kennee appeared in the uniform of an officer in her majesty's army; Myha, too, was present, wearing a dress of English fashion, out of compliment to the ladies who attended her. As each boat, laden with the happy Allaroonahans, left the shore, shouts from thousands of spectators rent the air, and many a prayer

was breathed for their success. Kennee and his bride were the last to depart, and when each generous friend had grasped their hands for the last time, it seemed like the parting of dearest relatives; as for Myha, so much had her amiableness of disposition, combined with the romantic story of her life, captivated every female heart, that each one called her sister, and shed a sister's tears over their last embrace; and, could any incident in this scene be more affecting than another, it was when one younger and more delicately formed than the rest hung on the neck of the graceful African, the stamp of death was on her brow, and as her cheek rested on the shoulder of her less fair but not less lovely sister, the contrast would have made each beholder deceive himself into believing he beheld a masterpiece fresh from the hand of a Phidias or a Chantrey, had not tears flowed in quick succession down the seeming marble; and as the blue eyes of the Saxon maiden were reflected in the dark ones of her she loved, as none but a youthful maiden can love, she whispered in a tone so low that only one on earth heard the subtle sound, "God has said to my spirit come; but my heart tells me that no such moment as this will stain our future joy, for I know if I am worthy to go to Him, thou wilt

be there too ere long." In after years, when time had fretted away the realities of this scene, but left the words engraven on her heart, Myha could almost believe an angel had spoken them.

As the vessels left the harbour a royal salute was fired from the forts and ships of war; nor did the throng of gazers depart until their topmost spars were hidden by the eastern hills. The voyage from the West Indies to the Coast of Guinea is one of considerable length, both winds and current being adverse; but to Kennee and Myha, anxious as they were to behold their mountain home, the days fled swiftly by. They had innumerable stories to listen to and relate, of what each had endured since their former passage across the great waters. Then, again, they could not refrain from comparing their then happy lot with the horrors they had endured in the slaver's hold; nor did Kennee refrain from dwelling, with a feeling in which fear and pleasure equally shared, on that moment of despair when the last struggles of Fetish superstition had prompted him to suggest a voluntary death as the only means by which they could escape from what seemed to be hopeless misery. "Often Myha," said he, "have I thought upon that scene—of that moment

chosen by God to free my heart from the last hold of its impious superstition—of your imploring look and impassioned words as you exclaimed, 'Oh Kennee, trust in God and we shall soon meet again'—words so full of truth and love." Thus they discoursed of trials in which they had received from each other a mutual aid, and revealed the emotions endured when alone and under the galling ban of slavery.

The African shores at length appear in sight, and the flag that seals the freedom of all over whom it waves, floated in the evening breeze on the walls of Cape Coast Castle: the wanderers see the pledge of faith, and feel assured that treachery dwells not within the walls of the good white man. When they came to an anchor, a boat was sent on shore with a letter from the Governor of Jamaica to the Governor of Cape Coast, recommending the Allaroonahans to his protection, and dwelling upon the advantages to civilization and commerce likely to flow from the success of this expedition. Kennee and his chiefs were invited to meet the Governor and Council in the great hall of the castle, to lay before them the plans they proposed to adopt to regain possession of their native valley.

The British residents had long felt the vast importance of effecting a communication with the interior; especially with the independent states lying beyond the kingdom of Ashantee, with whose country no intercourse took place, and to the white man that portion of the range of the Kong mountains was a *terra incognita:* they were therefore the better disposed to regard with favour any likely proposition that might be laid before them. At first they looked upon the matter as only of small importance, a means through which something to extend the trade of the colony might be effected; but when the circumstances that had brought about the movement, and the objects to be accomplished by it, were explained, they at once saw that it was no ordinary case, nor one in which the interests of commerce alone were concerned, for by it the knowledge of Christianity would be carried amongst tribes as yet wholly given up to the idolatrous and bloody rites of Fetish worship. Success, too, appeared all but certain when the leadership was in the hands of such a man as he who had addressed them: in Kennee all beheld a man fitted to conceive and carry out so noble a work.

The result of their palaver, to use the native term, for we are once more in Africa, was that a deputation

of Allaroonahans, accompanied by two native soldiers from the fort, to show that they were under British protection, was despatched at once to Coomassie, to obtain from the king of Ashantee his consent to the passage of the Allaroonahans through his dominions, and in the event of his compliance they bound themselves to assist him in the war against Dahomy; for though that war had lingered through several campaigns, no decisive battle had been fought.

Until the return of the messengers the Allaroonahans remained on board the vessels—a portion of the soldiers coming on shore each day to practice on the level ground outside the town. Their presence created a great sensation amongst the people, many of whom volunteered to join the expedition, and Kennee, with the consent of the authorities, permitted a few to be enrolled into his little army, which was thus raised to four hundred strong; a small number, but from their arms and training equal to twenty times their force of such troops as the native chiefs could bring against them.

In the midst of these preparations for war, the interests of religion were not neglected: the Wesleyan mission took great interest in the christian strangers,

instructing them in many points of doctrine which it is the policy of the Romish clergy to leave unexplained. They also provided three negro youths educated in their schools to accompany them to their native valley, and remain with them until the young Allaroonahans who were to proceed to the training college at Sierra Leone should be ready to take charge of the infant church. These, and many other things of smaller importance were satisfactorily arranged before the return of the messengers, whose absence was delayed some days beyond the time in which their mission should have been accomplished. Upon arriving at the Ashantee capital they learnt that the king was several days' journey to the eastward of the city, where he was collecting an army to defend his frontiers against the now annual incursion of the Dahomans: following His Majesty thither they met with a gracious reception, the more especially as his own warriors were getting disheartened at the seemingly interminable war.

The great oath of the king was sworn that, should the Allaroonahans assist him in the forthcoming war, a safe conduct through his dominions would be granted for their families and property; and that a tenth of the spoil taken from the enemy should be given to them.

In token of the ratification of this treaty on his part, His Majesty sent to his brother of Allaroonah a present of a magnificent robe of silk wrought with gold, and a gold headed cane of state. Five hundred slaves, the property of the king of Ashantee, accompanied the messengers to convey the military stores from the coast to the royal camp, and the little army of warriors set out to commence the campaign against the enemies of their country.

When Myha was once more happily restored to the protecting arm of Kennee, it was her constant prayer that she might never again be separated from him. But at this crisis, when personal feelings, if indulged in, might endanger the success of the war and the safety of those engaged in it, she nobly sacrificed her happiness for the general good, and by her example stayed the murmurs of those of her own sex, who looked with disapprobation upon the order that the women and children were to remain at Cape Coast until the termination of the war.

When the Allaroonahans were within a day's march of the Ashantee camp, Kennee sent messengers to give notice of his approach, and to ask when it would be the pleasure of his royal brother to receive him. The

reception was fixed for the following evening. As the fame of the Allaroonahans, their exploits in war across the great waters, and their military equipments had preceded them, the whole of the Ashantee army, numbering twelve thousand warriors, was under arms to do them honour. First in the order of march came a company of artillerymen, all Allaroonahans, with three of the guns and their ammunition waggons, then a hundred men with muskets and fixed bayonets, after these Kennee mounted on a charger and attended by his chief officers; before him was borne the standard of Allaroonah, whilst behind him floated that of England, signifying that he was under British protection. He was followed by the rest of the warriors, the remaining artillery bringing up the rear. A band of musicians, playing a spirit-stirring march on European instruments, formed, in the opinion of the Ashantees, the most formidable part of this little army, as they supposed them to be some powerful Fetish that the Allaroonahans were bringing to avenge their wrongs.

Never before had such a sight been looked upon in Western Africa, but it is needless to dwell on the many ways in which the Ashantee warriors expressed their astonishment, or to recount the tedious forms of re-

ception and negotiation that followed, and which took up several days. At length they came to an end, for even Ashantee courtesy and diplomacy has its bounds, and the army was prepared to advance when Kennee's powers of endurance were put to another and more severe test. He had just left the royal pavilion, where the final arrangements had been completed, when a messenger came to inform him that the Fetishmen pronounced the time to be unpropitious, and therefore the army must not move during that moon.

Kennee durst not openly ridicule the absurdity of allowing such a superstition to interfere with the tactics of the war, great dissatisfaction having already been manifested by the Ashantees towards their allies for worshipping the God of the white men instead of their musical instruments, which they had discovered were not regarded by the Allaroonahans as Fetish. He therefore placed it in a different light, pointing out to the Ashantee monarch the great loss he would sustain by maintaining so large an army in idleness, while, in the mean time, the enemy were ravaging his frontier towns and villages. The king saw the force of Kennee's arguments, but as he could not do anything in opposition to the Fetish, he endeavoured to propitiate

his gods, and to this end a large number of victims were sacrificed. But it was not until these offerings had been backed by numerous presents to the priests, that permission was said to be granted by the Fetish for the warriors to meet their enemies. As Kennee could not countenance these superstitious and heathenish rites, neither he nor any of his people attended their celebration, and the Fetishmen were not slow in discovering that their imposture was known, they, however, waited in silence for an opportunity to be revenged, which vengeance would consist in the utter extirpation of the Allaroonahans.

CHAPTER XXV.

" Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own my native land!
Whose heart within him ne'er hath burn'd
As home his footstep he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand."

SCOTT.

AFTER marching for several days they at length came in sight of the Dahoman army, which numbered fifteen thousand; and consisted of warriors and Amazons. The allies encamped in the order in which they were to fight. The King of Ashantee, with seven thousand of his bravest warriors, occupied the centre of the position; the left wing, three thousand strong, was under the command of the king's brother: on the right were the Allaroonahans, supported by two thousand Ashantees. For three days the armies lay viewing each other, as if measuring their respective strength. On the fourth morning the Dahomans commenced skirmishing, and a straggling fight was maintained

throughout the day. On the following morning the whole of the Dahoman army was put in motion; they marched in the shape of a wedge directly on the centre of the Allaroonahans. Kennee's advice was, that the left wing should fall back, and the right advance, and thus the object of the enemy would be defeated. His counsel, however, was rejected, and the left wing ordered to advance, with the intention of placing the enemy between two fires. Before they could take up a position, however, they were attacked by the enemy, and after making a short stand were routed with great slaughter; the fugitives took shelter in the ranks of their companions, causing considerable confusion in the troops under the king's command: he accordingly fell back as the enemy advanced; and by this retrograde movement, Kennee, who had maintained his first position, was placed on the flank of the Dahomans.

Up to this time the Allaroonahans had been concealed behind the crest of a small hill; but now the moment was come to strike for victory and home. Kennee's words and coolness had inspired every heart with confidence; and the eyes of all were directed to him, impatient for the signal to show themselves. Just then a priest came up and said that the Fetish were

fighting for the Dahomans, in consequence of the presence of the Christians; and if they continued to do so not an Ashantee would escape. He therefore commanded them, in the name of his Fetish, to retire from the field. Kennee replied that they looked only to God, who would give the battle to whom He pleased. He then commanded the battery to be unmasked, and a shower of grape was poured into the masses of the enemy, who were pressing on in the flush of victory. Taken by surprise, they wavered; but a regiment of Amazons rushed up the incline with terrific yells, and were followed by thousands of warriors. As the shot mowed down their ranks the gaps were speedily filled by others, and the little army seemed destined to be swept away by the mere numbers of their foes; but as an isolated rock which is momentarily hidden by an ocean wave reappears on its subsidence, so did the Allaroonahans, uninjured, sustain the assault of the Dahomans.

In the native warrior's hand the musket is discharged almost at random, creating great alarm, but doing little real service. The Allaroonahans, however, had learnt its true use, and now kept up a steady, unceasing fire. Three times the enemy fell back, and a fourth time

renewing the attack, succeeded in capturing one of the guns. Kennee seized this moment, when their success had thrown them into a little confusion, to terminate the struggle by one bold stroke; he ordered a volley to be discharged, and before the smoke cleared away sprang to the front of his men.—"Allaroonahans," he exclaimed, "follow to your mountain home." Immediately four hundred bayonets flashed in the sun; and with a simultaneous shout of "our mountain home and victory," they charged down the hill, sweeping everything before them. This encouraged the two thousand Ashantees, whom Kennee had hitherto kept back, to press on, and the route became a panic. The rest of the army, which had been thrown into disorder, again re-formed and joined in pursuit of the Dahomans, who fled beyond their camp, leaving immense spoil in the hands of the conquerors. The loss sustained by the Ashantees was about two thousand warriors, whilst of the Dahomans twice that number fell in the battle, or were slain in the pursuit, principally by the fire of the Allaroonahans, who had twelve men killed and forty to fifty wounded: the number of prisoners taken by the victors was above a thousand.

The next morning Kennee was impatient to follow

up the victory, before the enemy should have time to rally; but most of the Ashantees were too much engaged collecting the spoil to think of moving for some days to come. However, he induced two thousand warriors to join him; and with these and his Allaroonahans he pressed after the retreating Dahomans, and on the fourth day came up with them. They were about five thousand strong; and emboldened by their superior number, offered battle. Kennee opened a heavy fire from his guns, directing them on that point where he judged the king and his Fetishmen to be. In a short time a warrior came from the enemy's ranks bearing a bough of truce. His message was an invitation from the king of Dahomy to the Ashantee chiefs to come to him and hold a council. "Dog," exclaimed Kennee, "does thy master think we are all slaves that we shonld be so anxious to become sacrifices to his Fetish? Let him come to us if he desire peace; or I will show thee a spot where we will meet him." He then directed the guns on one spot; and pointing to the marks where the shot had buried themselves in the earth, he said, "I will go there with ten of my chiefs; let the king of Dahomy meet me with a like number of his own; but let him not rely

upon perfidy, for we have something more powerful than it."

Having dismissed the messenger, Kennee immediately proceeded, with Allah and nine Ashantee chiefs, to the spot indicated. Presently the Dahoman monarch, attended by the prescribed number of warriors, came forward. The Dahomans supposed the warriors wearing the dress of the white men to be natives of Cape Coast, and Kennee allowed his foe to approach before he threw aside the scarf with which he had concealed his features. The first impulse of the haughty Dahoman, when he beheld the Young Lion of Allaroonah, was to draw his dagger, as he advanced a step or two, exclaiming, "Thou art my slave, and comest thou to mock me?"

"We stand on dangerous ground," said Kennee, pointing to the furrows under their feet. "Though once thy captive I am now thy conqueror—thou desirest peace."

"There can be no peace between us," replied the Dahoman.

"Between Dahomy and Ashantee," said Kennee, "there may be peace, with friendship; but between Dahomy and Allaroonah there must be peace main-

tained—not as thou sayest by friendship, but through the fear of our name."

"Then there will be war, for no Dahoman ever knew fear; but I came to confer with the king and chiefs of Ashantee."

"Ashantee and Allaroonah are brothers," replied Kennee, "and will make peace with a mutual enemy only on these conditions. First—that thou restore the spoil taken from the people. Secondly—that thou release all the Ashantees and Allaroonahans held in slavery in Dahomy. Thirdly—that thou send hostages to Coomassie, and swear the king's oath not to make war again on Ashantee. As for ourselves we will receive no hostages, nor exact any oaths; but three of our warriors must remain at Abomey; for as we cannot trust thy friendship we will be prepared to receive thee in a manner thou wotest not of. The truce shall continue until the shadows disappear beneath our feet, when, if no messenger arrives, the battle will recommence."

Kennee ceased, but, without deigning to salute the Dahoman monarch, returned to his own camp; and when the sun had attained the meridian, he ordered the guns to open fire upon the enemy, and a straggling fight commenced which would have led to a general battle,

had not a shot chanced to hit the Royal Pavillion, burying beneath its silken folds the king and many of his chief men. This convinced them of the superiority of their enemies in possessing Fetish more powerful in war than their own; for they looked upon the field guns as endowed with supernatural power. Accordingly, with the consent of the warriors, Amazons as well as soldiers, the terms of the treaty demanded by Kennee were agreed to. When this was ratified, and a thousand Dahomans had laid down their arms and marched into Ashantee, the allies returned to the main army, where Kennee left Allah to superintend the division of the spoil, whilst he went to Cape Coast to conduct Myha to her mountain home.

It is needless to tell of the joy she felt when they again met; or to relate with what alacrity she prepared to accompany him. Encumbered with baggage and the spoils of the Dahomans, the progress of the happy Allaroonahans was necessarily slow; but as they neared the mountains, whose peaks looked down upon their native valley, and every object became familiar to the older warriors they emulated their companions, and pressed on to attain the summit of the low hills that lay before them and hid it from their

view. How different the intention of the eager throng, and with what an opposite spirit were they animated from that army of Dahomans who, a few years before, had crowned the same ridge! Those had seen spread before them a smiling, happy land, which, urged on by their savage natures, they were about to reduce to a wilderness, and pollute with the bloody rites of a diabolical superstition—these to convert the wilderness into a garden, and plant in the midst of it the religion of Christ. The yell of the Dahoman thousands had then reverberated from its rocky barriers: the same mountains now re-echoed the joyous shout of captives returning to liberty and home, from slavery or exile on a foreign strand.

THE END.

00038296

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 April, 2016